

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE ★ OCTOBER, 1947 ★ 25 Cents



THESE UNITED STATES...X—Minnesota
Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOFS

TWO COMPLETE SHORT NOVELS
YOUNG WINGS UNFURLING

An adventure in primitive Britain
by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

UNDER PENALTY OF DEATH
by GEORGES SIMENON

Also many short stories, fact articles
and special features



THESE UNITED STATES . . . X — MINNESOTA

The Coming of the Norsemen — 1362

IT is known historically that King Magnus, the first joint ruler of Sweden and Norway, in 1355 sent one Paul Knutsson of his body-guard with a stout expedition to find and assist the then lost colony in Greenland; and that in 1364 Knutsson and the remnants of his force came home to Norway.

Historians believe, from many inscriptions, graves, and Norse weapons and implements of the period found in Minnesota and Canada, that a portion at least of the expedition got into Hudson's Bay, and came south into the present Minnesota. Largely by the efforts of Mr. H. R. Holand, their actual route has been traced through western Minnesota, corroborative evidence has been secured in Norway and elsewhere, and a most impressive body of texts now points unescapably to the presence of the Norse here between 1355 and 1364, and their losses by massacre. A free translation of the mes-

sage carved upon the famous Rune Stone found near Kensington, Minnesota, would read:

"We have ten of our party by the sea to look after our ships fourteen days journey from this island in the year of our Lord, 1362. . . . We are eight Goths (Swedes) and twenty-two Norwegians on an exploration-journey from Vinland through the West. We had camp by two skerries one day's journey north from this stone. We were out and fished one day. After we came home we found ten of our men red with blood and dead. Ave Maria, save us from evil."

AND what of it, you ask; did they accomplish nothing? Let us imagine how valorous Paul Knutsson would answer for himself:

"I cannot give any great report. We found in your land no trace of the lost colony; the colonists had mingled with the natives. We discovered an excel-

lent country; those sent afar north and west made a great journey. Yet, even if those who went so far mostly died, I cannot call it wasted.

"Regardless of results, no effort is a waste. This was a loss, but not waste. All men die; why not pass on in the search for what lies in the unknown? That is a worthy end for any man.

"Our party left a few graves, a few stones—nothing else, you would say. Yet I say it was a noble thing, because a few ventured into wasteland and some returned. Thereby proving nothing, to your minds; but to us showing an element of faith and courage and the guiding hand of Providence.

"I can affirm you only one thing: to die unsung and afar is no great sorrow. It matters little if one's heroism be known and praised; it matters much if one's heart be strong."

Thank you, Paul Knutsson. Only a man's man could have voiced those last words.

Readers' Comment

More Fillers?

THIS is not so much criticism as it is an appeal.

Whatever you may do, never cut down on your quota of historical stories. To a lazy person like myself, they are actually a sugar-coated education—history painlessly taught.

Never succumb to the blandishments of the serialists. Let each issue remain a complete entity, a well rounded meal, so that one can lay the issue aside satisfied, without the frustrated feeling a serial leaves.

Enough of don'ts. Now for a, to me, very important point. Why not more space fillers, short amusing or instructive items, literary hors d'œuvres, to whet one's appetite for more serious reading? When I pick up a magazine I always take a short exploratory trip through its pages, searching for such features, then settle to my reading. I think you'll find this a common practice among magazine readers.

Forrest W. Shugart

The Same Pre-War Thickness

IN this post-war world when most every magazine has gone after the filthy dollar and filled its pages with ads, even to the extent of cutting down on their stories to save space for advertising, I've found that BLUE BOOK has them all beat. Your magazine is the same pre-war thickness, besides sticking to the old policy of no advertising matter. In this day and age when a quarter is small change, it will still buy a thick copy of BLUE BOOK—and look at what you get in exchange: about a dozen and a half stories, not just one-pagers, but honest-to-goodness full-length fiction stories, besides scads of articles thrown in to boot. If I wanted to read the ads, I'd buy a newspaper. It's cheaper.

Why doesn't BLUE BOOK go on the air and dramatize its best stories? I'm sure it would become one of the headline shows.

Charles L. Stratton

From a Teacher

WHEN the editorial policy, and the published fiction, is of such consistently high rank as that of BLUE BOOK, I think thanks are in order.

In my work of training writers, I recommend BLUE BOOK to all students who are qualified to write popular adventure fiction. Many who had not previously read the BLUE BOOK have thanked me for recommending it; some have thought it a happy medium between the slicks and the pulps, and all have agreed it is an excellent book to study. . . . So, I thank you for the use of your "Text."

W. J. R.

BLUE BOOK

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DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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Published monthly at McCall Bldg., Dayton 1, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton 1, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices, 239 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, October, 1947, LXXXV, No. 6. Copyright, 1947, by McCall Corporation. All rights reserved in the United States, Great Britain and in all countries participating in the Pan American Copyright Convention and the International Copyright Union. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Subscription Prices: one year \$2.50, two years \$4.00, in U. S., Canada and Pan-American countries. Extra in other foreign countries \$1.50 per year. For change of address give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new. Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in the Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts and art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit. Printed in U. S. A.

Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

JOURNEY *beyond*

IN THE BELIEF THAT LIFE ITSELF IS AN ELECTRICAL PROCESS, THIS PASSIONATE SCIENTIST CARRIED HIS RESEARCH EVEN BEYOND THAT OF MAD FRANKENSTEIN.

by WALTER DE STEIGUER

FOR ten years I have kept silence. I had thought—hoped—to carry with me into my grave all knowledge of the events here set down. But I have changed my mind. An explosion over the New Mexico desert began to change it for me. And events since that have made me think that now I should warn of what I have seen.

For the scientists will keep on. Nothing will stop them. They are busy, very busy, battering down the last doors to that powder-house, the Atom. And it is in my mind that some day, somewhere, a man will stand in a laboratory with his finger on a trigger which can explode our Earth into another sun. A man human and fallible, even as you and I. Perhaps the man will not be certain he has his finger on that trigger, until—

Bitterness, prejudice, ignorance? Perhaps. But more than all, cold fear. For I have been to the edge and looked over. Not into the ultimate abyss, no. Merely into one of the minor horrors on the way.

Among those acts and happenings which have produced a tragedy, there is always one to which we can look back, and say: "It started there. If only I hadn't."

It is so that I look back—because, except for Mona Newell, I think that Court would never have built the second projector. His mind would have realized the blasphemy of what he hoped for; the possibility that a soul-searing horror might result even from success. And bitterly I blame myself, that my anger and my hurt permitted the creation of that damnable apparatus. It does no good to say that I did not believe—really believe—that it could work. I should never have left him free for it. I should have been there, ready to catch up an iron bar and flail the thing into shattered glass and twisted metal, if at the last there was no other way.

I have tried to tell myself that, from the first meeting of Court and Mona, all that followed was inevitable. But even their meeting I brought about.

That day is very clear in my memory. I had called at the studio for

Mona, and we were debating what to do with the afternoon. It was a spring day, too perfect to spoil with work, or even with thought.

I said: "Have you ever seen an electro-physicist, Mona?"

"No, Ian," she said. "Do you think I should?"

"I'll show you one," I said. "Name of Courtney Kane. He is a lunatic, but interesting to look at."

Warners had brought Mona out from New York a month before, for screen tests; but they could not make up their minds whether she would be box-office or not. Either you were frenetic about Mona's dancing, or you wondered why anyone was. It was very simple—just rhythm, grace, motion made into silent music. Since meeting her at one of George Brannigan's cocktail parties, I had been promoting the idea that marrying a sculptor with a moderate independent income and an aversion to work would perfectly round out her life. But if you are physically suited for coal-heaving or the prize-ring, and look it, that sort of thing takes time.

We drove for an hour, and pulled up before one of those old-time gingerbread-encrusted California houses. It was smack in the middle of an oil-field, with derricks as thick around it as orange trees had been twenty years before, when a local real-estator had stuck Court's father with a dying grove, at a special Easterner's price. Mona widened her eyes. They were like sea water that day—very nice.

"Yes," I said, "this is where he lives. I told you he was a lunatic. . . . His papa was crazy too. Like a fox, as it turned out."

Okata, Court's little Jap, hissed us politely into the hall. "Mr. Kane in lab. I tell him."

"Never mind, Okata," I said. "We'll go up."

We started up a stair, once open but now boarded in, and I explained for Mona's benefit: "Court's parents died just after his graduation from Tech. He went back for a two-year p.g. course in electro-physics, then ripped out the partitions and ceilings of the upper floor here, and put in a private labora-

tory. Spends eighteen hours a day tinkering with gadgets. A low character. He fights and drinks. No moral sense—"

"You're close friends," Mona decided.

"Nonsense. We bloodied each other's noses from the age of nine on. We've sort of got used to each other, that's all."

The laboratory seemed even worse cluttered than when I had seen it last. It was full of incomprehensible apparatus and machines from the size of an elephant down, with insulated cables snaking into them and out of them and across the floor. You tripped if you walked, and there was no place to sit down.

Court was doing something sparky—electric welding, perhaps—on a machine at the far end. He pulled off his goggles, glanced over his shoulder, and then came up to us, wiping his hands on a wad of waste. He had on rope-soled *espadrilles*, filthy flannel trousers, and a sweat shirt; but he looked, as always, like a sun-god come down to earth.

I said, "Court, Mona—Mona, Court. . . . Why don't you keep a couple of chairs up here?"

He hadn't looked at me. He was looking at Mona. After a moment he said, "*Su casa, Mona.*"

"He knows a few words of English too," I told Mona. "And he can open doors, and turn a faucet on and off."

Court said: "Come down to the patio, Mona. I'll get Mackinnon stupefied with liquor, and then we can talk."

THERE was something in this. A moderate amount of Scotch produces for me a timeless interval during which silence seems better than conversation.

It was very pleasant there in the half-enclosure of the patio, with the sun on the tiles and the scent of orange blossoms from a pair of old trees softening the faint odor of the oil. Court and Mona were getting on like a house afire. He was explaining, animatedly, about some recent work of his, and I was only half listening. But at length the tag end of a sentence registered

LIGHT

He said: "I'm transferring the recording cylinder to the projector. If you'll help me steady it—"



through my inattention: "... come in for you Thursday at two, then."

I said: "Thursday at two will be all right for me. I'll be free all the rest of the day."

"My idea exactly," Court asserted. "Give you a chance to catch up on your reading."

"Miss Newell does not go out with strange gentlemen," I said. "Such ideas are repugnant to her."

Mona laughed. "But Ian, this once? Court has a marvelous machine. He is going to record my personality. And then show it to me. The personality, I mean."

Court ran a hand through his shock of yellow hair. I saw, with surprise, that he was under strong repressed excitement. "I've got hold of something big, Ian. Big, I tell you! By heaven, I don't know, myself. ... But wait till you see! And I want Mona to make the first recording."

He had already turned back to her, and she to him. And watching their faces, I began to wonder whether it had been clever of me to give either of them a look at the other.

"All right," I said. "This once."

The next five times I tried to get hold of Mona, she was out. But they did stop by to pick me up on Thursday.

The laboratory, when we ascended to it that afternoon, displayed a drastic reorganization. Everything from the central floor area had been uprooted, moved to the side walls, and packed there in disarray: small stuff chinked into the spaces between larger units. The effect was unmistakably that of a ruthless scrapping; and again I sensed the importance this new development, whatever it was, had in Court's mind.

At the far end of the cleared space were two machines. I walked over to look at them. The left-hand one was the larger, and would have occupied most of a ten-foot cube. They were somewhat similar in appearance, since the outer case of each was merely a screen of close-woven wire of some silvery metal. Each had a large horn of material resembling bakelite, perhaps two feet in diameter at the outer end and eighteen inches at the inner end. These pointed toward the cleared floor space. These horns, also, were sheathed with fitted screens of the

silvery wire; but a mechanism had been provided for swinging aside the circular section covering their mouths.

Court flicked the wire shield of the larger machine with his finger-nail. "This is the recorder. That other one's a projector. It still needs a minor adjustment or two, so I can't show you any results today. But we'll go ahead with the recording."

I HAVE called these things "machines" for want of a better word; but they were not machines, in the sense of having many moving parts. They were collections of electrical apparatus, complexly interconnected: Enormous, contorted vacuum tubes containing tiny plates and filaments; grilles, screens, and grids of wiring; spidery structures of glass, copper, and aluminum—a maze as incomprehensible to me as a cyclotron to a savage.

Mona had come to stand beside us. Court turned a switch on an enameled steel box bolted to the wall, and something began to revolve inside it. He stood watching a dial on which a needle wavered slowly, first to one side of the zero mark, then to the other.

He said: "I'm neutralizing the recording cylinder. It's a process roughly analogous to the demagnetizing of iron by alternations of a magnetic field diminishing gradually to zero. The wire mesh which covers the apparatus operates as a shield against stray electrical effects. Don't approach closer than four feet, now. Your bodies would affect the very sensitive recording cylinder, despite the shield."

"Do you have any one-syllable words for all this?" I asked. "It would be more interesting if we knew what goes on."

"I can explain it better after you see what the projector does. The basic principle hinges on this: Electricity is the only reality. Matter itself is electrical. Life—living—is an electrical process. Our bodies are electrical machines, vibrant with millions of tiny currents, and emanating faint electrical auras—fields of force. And by suitable means, any electrical effect can be recorded, and again reproduced."

He hesitated, then added, with a peculiar emphasis: "The ego of an individual, his special and peculiar life-essence—call it what you will—is the summation of his electrical effects. Merely that."

I said: "And the Winged Victory, no doubt, is merely a piece of stone."

An old anger was rising inside me. From our boyhood, it had been this way with us. Comradeship, loyalty, deep affection for each other—but always this plane of cleavage between our minds. For months it would remain invisible and forgotten, and then suddenly it would be there, as real and rigid and impenetrable as a sheet of glass. A clouded glass through which neither of us could see into the other's thoughts. Then there would be quick anger on my side; and on his, puzzlement and an amused contempt.

The cold incisiveness of his mind had a quality of terror for me. I felt that he stripped the flesh off beauty to get at its bare bones—to see what held it up.

Once I had said to him: "There's something appalling, a sort of ferocious lust, in the way you scientists pursue knowledge. You're as merciless as weasels after a rabbit. You spring on it and suck the life-blood, and leave a dead carcass of fact behind you. And like weasels, you're never satisfied."

He gibed: "You've been eating something."

"I mean it," I insisted. "I'm afraid of scientists. Any of you would put humanity in the cart, just to find out something new."

"Tripe. Look what science has done for humanity."

"Done for" is right! Or soon will be."

"That's sloppy thinking, Ian. Humanity may do for itself, I grant you. But you can't blame that on science."

"Give gunpowder to children, and then blame the children," I said.

"They've got to grow up—stop being children. If exact scientific knowledge isn't the most important thing in life, I'd like to know what is."

"All right, I'll tell you," I said. "Listen carefully: The most important thing in life is to be able to sit idle on a spring morning and be glad of the beauty of the earth."

"Is that supposed to mean something?"

"Not for you. You're a scientist."

He grinned at me, then clutched the throat of the desk phone and began shouting into its mouthpiece, imitating a frenzied broadcaster:

"The referee brings them to the center of the ring. Killer Mackinnon refuses to shake hands! He's going to make it a grudge fight! The bell! They come out swinging! The Killer lands a haymaker! Kid Kane's knees buckle! He's groggy! He doesn't know what it's all about! The Killer smashes him—he's down! He's up, he's down—"

That was the way our arguments ended, always. He had a charm as potent with men as with women. You could not stay angry with him.

But this time there was more behind it. Mona was behind it—Mona standing there, looking at him as he had never looked at me. Both of us knew.

He didn't answer me. He took a piece of chalk from his pocket and marked a square on the floor, some twenty feet in advance of the recorder. "Keep inside that square, Mona. I have to focus on you, so to speak."

Mona glanced about, then overhead. "It's getting dusky in here. Won't you need more light?"

"No. This isn't like photography. Pitch dark would do as well."

"What must I do? Stand still? Or move about?"

"Anything you like, so you stay in the focal area. How about a few dance steps? The recording period will be exactly one minute and a half. Then it cuts off automatically."

He went back to the enameled steel box, circling carefully around the recorder, and stood for a moment watching the needle of its dial. Then he turned the switch button—cutting out the neutralizer, probably. On the wall to one side was a large knife-switch—triple blades of glistening copper united at the top by a bar on which was a black handle. He grasped this and thrust the switch shut. Somewhere in the recorder a hissing began. The glass tubes began to glow—some only a dull red, others gleaming brightly. The hissing died away, to be replaced by a high whining note sug-

gestive of something vibrating with extreme rapidity.

Court had turned to face the girl, and now he said: "Ready, Mona! It begins!" There was a click, and I saw that the circular section of wire mesh covering the mouth of the bakelite horn had been whipped aside, leaving the horn open.

Of what followed, I do not like to speak. For me, it ended with a disintegrating emotional shock; and it is associated with later horror from which I shall never entirely recover. But it is important, and must be told.

Mona was dancing; her head thrown back, a tremulous half-smile on her lips, her eyes on Court. I have no words for the beauty of it, there amid the harsh and graceless confusion of that laboratory. I can only say that, for me, the walls receded, were no longer there. It was like watching some young girl dancing for her pleasure, alone in a forest glade in the morning of the world. A dance gay, hopeful, innocent and happy; yet touched with the pathos of all youth, which hopes for and believes so much.

She finished, and stood for a moment, her arms flung wide, the questioning smile still on her face. And then Court came swiftly from the shadow of the wall. He went to her and took her in his arms, and her arms went round his neck.

The high whining note of the recorder kept on and on. All I could think of was that Mona had misjudged the time, that her dance had ended too soon.

With a click, the wire screen whipped back across the mouth of the bakelite horn. The whining note cut off abruptly, and the tubes of the recorder dimmed and died. I turned and went as quietly as I could down the stair, leaving them motionless and silent, still locked in their embrace.

I THOUGHT I would walk out of the house and keep on walking; but after a moment I saw that would not do. So I waited in the patio.

They came down presently, a little pale and wide-eyed, as if they were astonished by what had happened; but Mona's eyes misted, and she ran to me and caught my arm in both her hands. I kissed her cheek and said: "It is all right, Mona. It was meant, I guess." And I took Court's hand and said: "Luck, kid."

He said: "We're flying to Yuma to be married tonight, Ian. If you'd come—"

"Don't be silly," I said. "Get going. Okata can drive me home in the roadster." . . .

They didn't get to Yuma. It turned into a bad night of rain and fog, and somehow their chartered plane got off its course and crashed on one of the Cuyamaca peaks. Court was only



"I've got hold of something big. Big, I tell you! But wait till you see!"

badly cut and bruised. But Mona and the pilot were instantly killed. . . .

The day they let Court out of the hospital, I called for him with my car. He was a good deal thinner, and he climbed into the car slowly and stiffly.

I said: "You're putting up at my place for a couple of weeks, you know. Longer, if you like."

He shook his head, not looking at me. "I want to get back to work. I've got to. It's the only—"

His voice trailed off to silence, and he sat slumped in his seat, looking ahead through the windshield. I couldn't think of anything to say.

It had been like this with us, ever since the crash. I would come to sit beside his bed, and he would not talk, and I could not think of anything to say. What had happened was complete, final. There was nothing to say about it; no use in talking. Yet it was always in our minds, filling them, crowding out everything else.

When we had threaded several blocks of traffic, I said: "All right. If you won't stay with me, I'll come and stay with you."

He did not like it, I could see. But I was determined not to leave him alone. Not for a while yet. He had always been a drastic sort, liable to do something unpredictable in moments of stress.

I drove on to my rooms and got a suitcase of clothes and a ten-pound lump of plastoline.

Okata had laid himself out on the dinner. He skittered about like an anxious spider, bringing on a succession of dishes, and becoming more and more depressed over Court's lack of appetite. Afterward we sat smoking, listening to some idiotic music on the radio. Court was fidgety. Presently he got up and went through the door of the laboratory stair, closing it after him in a way that told me not to follow.

I don't know what he did up there, if anything. I sat around till midnight, trying to read; then went off to bed. Probably he made an all-night session of it, as next day he didn't show up till lunch. After that, he returned at once to the laboratory. I spent the afternoon over my lump of plastoline, trying to get going on a Negro head I wanted to do in black basalt.

Court came down to dinner in his working-clothes, bolted a few mouthfuls, and again went up. By this time I was getting that feeling you have when you try to be helpful and discover that you are only making a nuisance of yourself. If it was going to keep on like this—

An hour later a buzzer sounded loudly somewhere in the rear. Okata came through and went up the stair. After thirty minutes of stamping and shuffling, he came down and poked his head out of the door: "Pliz! Mr. Kane say if you help—"

In the laboratory, the first thing I noticed was that the wire screens of both the recorder and the projector had been lifted off. Then I saw something bulky hanging from a chain hoist, above the projector. In general shape and size it resembled a bass drum with a two-inch steel bar running through it, like an axle, and projecting about a foot at either side. Court was standing at one end of the bar, steadying it with his hand, while he peered into the machine.

He said: "I'm transferring the recording cylinder to the projector, Ian. If you'll help me steady it into its bearings, while Okata slacks off on the hoist—"

I broke out: "Court, this is damned foolishness. Why can't you—"

He looked at me, and I stopped. "Never mind," he said. "Okata and I will manage."

WITH an effort, I got hold of myself. "Don't be like that. . . . I'll help you, of course."

The cylinder was awfully heavy. I think it must have weighed close to a thousand pounds. Court was on edge, cracking out commands, and evidently beside himself with fear of some mishap.

When, after fifteen minutes of struggle, we got the thing into place, I stood for a moment staring at it. The actual cylinder—the bass-drum part—looked as if it might be of some resinous or

glassy material. The impression I got was that it would have been transparent, except for millions of tiny points of light reflected from its interior. If you have ever seen a piece of pottery covered with "goldstone" glaze, that will give you some idea of its look—except that it was light, nearly colorless.

I turned to Court: "You said this thing would be affected by a human body, at close range. And here we've been crowding about it. Won't that ruin it?"

He shook his head. "Certain electrical emanations have been enormously amplified and impressed on it. In it, rather. It's permanent now. Like a developed negative, in a way. . . . That's all. I sha'n't need you again."

It was like a slap in the face. I stood staring at him, while his features wavered and blurred in my sight. He was warning me off—shutting me out. Shutting me away from something—whatever it might be—that was the last link either of us had with Mona.

His face came gradually back into focus. And then I saw something more. He was haggard, trembling with weakness; and his eyes were fixed on mine with an almost humble pleading. A dim realization of what he was asking came into my mind. Whatever it was that he expected the projector to show him—some simulacrum, some vision of the living Mona who had died—he was asking me to let him see alone. For the first time at least, alone. Let he be broken utterly by grief, before my eyes.

I turned and went down the stair.

When the upper rooms had been thrown into one for laboratory space, Court had converted the downstairs library and dining-room into sleeping apartments, connecting with the living-room by a corridor. I sat for a while in the living-room, trying to work on the Negro head, then went down the corridor to bed. For a long time I lay motionless, straining my ears for any sound from above. But at last sleep came.

SUDDENLY I was wide awake, rigid, listening again. Now there was no sound, but sound had waked me! The room was impenetrably black. I sat up and pulled the cord of the bedside lamp. My watch lay face up on the table. It was a few minutes past three o'clock.

Without any beginning, the sound was there again. A low humming, less sound than vibration. A vibration of walls, floor, ceiling: of the whole house; too minute and too rapid to be felt, yet at the lowest limit of what could be heard. It kept on and on, while sweat broke out in the palms of my clenched hands. I had no doubt of what was causing it: the projector.

What was Court seeing, there above? For the first time a cold fear began forming like ice inside me.

To lie motionless in bed was all at once intolerable. I ripped back the covers, thrust my feet into slippers and pulled on a dressing-gown. The humming cut off abruptly. I thought: *It lasted about a minute and a half. Of course! The same length of time as the recording.*

I stood for a few moments listening. A sort of anger was displacing my panic: anger with the mystery surrounding these machines, their potentialities, and Court's purpose with them. I opened the door and went silently down the corridor, guided by light from my room behind.

The living-room was black dark, but I knew it well enough to make my way across it. Cautiously opening the door to the laboratory stair, I saw light—faint light such as might be coming from a single bulb at the far end of the space above.

As I started up the steps, the humming began again. My head came above the floor level, and I stood frozen.

Mona was there, dancing.

I saw Mona, because of the instant and terrible conviction I felt. A conviction that what I saw was no image, no simulacrum, but something related much more closely to the living Mona. I was seeing her wraith, her spirit. It danced there, as her body had danced.

The wraith was three-dimensional, and clothed as Mona had been. The borders and outlines were sharply defined, but it was semi-transparent. I could see through it to the wall beyond. It did not appear to be self-luminous, but gleamed in an unearthly illumination—a funnel of dim bluish light emanating from the horn of the projector. This seemed not so much rays of light as a sort of phosphorescent glow, permeating space. It enveloped the dancing wraith, but faded to nothing a few feet beyond.

I had seen the dance of the living Mona from in front, as she faced the recorder. I was seeing this spirit-dance from the side and rear. Yet the back parts of the body were as completely defined as the fore parts could have been. It was there; it existed—though in what form or degree, I do not know.

The dance ended. The wraith stood motionless, arms extended. Then something formed at the outer edge of the blue funnel—took shape, swiftly advancing. With the hair lifting on the back of my neck, I saw that it was—the wraith of Court himself. He too had shared in the recording.

The two came together, to stand locked in a long embrace.

There was a click from the projector. The blue light-funnel collapsed. It seemed to me that the locked figures

endured for an instant longer. Then they were gone, leaving the floor bare and empty.

I stumbled on up the stair and across to Court. He was standing beside the projector, half lighted by a shaded bulb hanging from the rafters.

He said: "You saw?"

"Yes," I said. "Yes. My God, Court—" I could not go on.

"Do you believe? Do you believe, now?"

I did not answer. After a moment, he came more into the cone of light and began pacing back and forth, with quick strides. I saw that he was in the grip of some overwhelming emotion. And slowly, through my daze, I began to sense what it was: not grief, not even anger at his spying, but something amazing and very different. Triumphant!

HE came to me and caught my arm in a bruising grip, shaking it. "You saw. Well—do you believe, now? . . . Why don't you answer me? Are you afraid?"

"Yes," I said.

He dropped my arm, staring at me. There was something close to contempt in his stare.

"This is only the beginning," he said. "Only the beginning, do you hear? This is only the beginning!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! Haven't you got any brains? Can't you see what's plain before you?" His voice rose to a cracked half-scream: "I can re-create her! I can re-create Mona! And I'm going to."

"You're crazy," I said. "You're gone crazy."

He was gripping my arm again. "Listen. Try to understand. I don't know why I bother to explain to you, but— Do you remember what I told you? That every atom, every molecule, emanates electrical force? That the life-energy itself is electrical force? . . . Well, all that was Mona—all, I tell you—is recorded there in that cylinder. Body and spirit. Flesh, blood, bones, ego. She was recorded in life, and she can be brought forth and made living again. You saw it. You saw it didn't you? . . . Answer me!"

"I don't know," I said.

He was suddenly calm.

"Yes, you saw it. But that was a fleeting, an evanescent re-creation. And only partial. It's got to be made fixed and permanent. . . . Power! It's merely a question of power. A new projector, bigger and enormously more powerful—that's all it needs. . . . Ten or twelve thousand amperes at two hundred and fifty volts—somewhere in that neighborhood. That means a tough cooling problem, too. It's going to take time, but it can be worked out."

"Court—"

"Well? . . . Say, what's the matter with you?"

"Court, listen to me. I've listened to you—now you listen to me. Give this up. Give it up now. Destroy that apparatus and forget—"

"You're the crazy one. You're crazy, to talk that way."

"No," I said, "I'm not crazy. Abandon this, or you'll drive straight on into madness. Believe me, Court. You're tampering with something no man has a right to lay hands on—even if he can. . . . I don't for a second believe you can do what you say. But if you could, it would be a horror."

I put a hand to my head and stood for a moment, dazed by fresh horror.

"Why—why, if you could do this—you could create a dozen Monas. A hundred—"

We were silent, staring at each other.

"So I could," he said at last. "So I could. . . . I hadn't thought of that. But it's true. . . . Of course, I wouldn't."

"Wouldn't you? What if the recreated Mona died? Or even grew old, ill, unhappy? With the spring-time of her life, a whole life to live over again, waiting there in that cylinder? And yourself—you'll be wanting a recording to fall back on, won't you? And your children—will you deny it to them?"

He said, slowly: "By heaven, this thing opens out, doesn't it? I hadn't realized. . . . It's immortality, of a sort."

"Do you see, now? Do you understand that you've got to give it up—all of it? Destroy these machines, destroy every record—"

"Don't talk like that!" He made a violent gesture. "Do you think I'm going to hold my hand, when I can have Mona back?"

"Court," I said, "you can't trust even yourself with this power. And imagine such knowledge released to the world! I don't believe in it, I don't grant its truth—but I'm meeting you on your own ground, for the moment. Say you're right. Say you can do it. Can't you realize that the knowledge must die now, forever, before it gets out?"

"It needn't get out."

"But it will. No care of yours can keep it secret for long. And then? What would happen is a horror out of hell, just to think of."

"But you say it won't work. You don't believe in it. If that's so, why do you want to keep me from going on with it?"

"Because I'm afraid," I said. "I've seen enough to be deadily afraid of it, lock, stock, and barrel. I want to keep you from creating some monstrosity that will send you shrieking into madness. . . . For God's sake, listen to me, Court."



Mona was dancing—a dance gay, hopeful and happy, yet touched with pathos.

It went on and on—a nightmare argument, getting nowhere. We were like two men fighting under water: impeded, aiming ineffective blows.

What we had seen had blasted our minds into disorder and confusion. Neither of us could hold to a cogent line of reasoning, or express clearly what he felt. From storms of passionate emotion we would emerge suddenly into flat, exhausted calms, and fall into banal discussion of details.

During one of these periods, I said: "Even assuming that you can recreate the substanceless spirit, what about the body? You've got a hundred and twenty pounds of actual matter to provide—matter that no human skill can fashion into the needed forms."

He said: "To explain exactly, I'd have to use a language you don't understand. Scientific lingo. But it's something like this: Imagine we've got a figure constructed of wire, and

highly magnetized. We direct a blast of iron filings at it. Well, the filings will adhere to the wire figure; build up in it. Every separate wire—or section of the same wire—will automatically attract and hold exactly the amount of iron filings for which its magnetic condition fits it."

He gestured toward the projector. "Now, this machine re-creates an electrical 'figure'—that's a poor word for it, but it will serve, for simplicity. Also, the projector directs on that 'figure' a sort of atom-stream. Or more accurately, a blizzard of electrons. The electrical 'figure' seizes on and appropriates these, arranging them by a delicate process of automatic selectivity. . . . Are you getting it?"

"I think so. Go on."

He ran a hand through his disordered hair. "Well, I can't put the rest of it into words that would mean anything to you. But if we have enough power behind this electron-blizzard, the 'figure' will be packed with actual matter. Permanent matter! The living body which was recorded will be duplicated. Blood, bone, flesh—every hair, every nerve filament, every skin pore—exactly as it was originally. . . . It's a sort of packing, governed by automatic selectivity that can't go wrong. But until the packing reaches and passes a certain stage, it isn't permanent. There's got to be plenty of power. And I mean, plenty. It will run to five or six thousand horsepower, I think."

A shaft of light from the just-risen sun came in at the window, striking across his face. He was haggard with exhaustion, his eyes red-rimmed, his cheeks and chin bristling with beard stubble. My own case was little better. It seemed to me, suddenly, an obscenity that we should be standing here, speculating on the horsepower needed to fabricate anew the body of the girl we had equally loved and lost.

"Court," I said, "we're half cracked over this already. It's too hideous to look at, and stay sane. It's blasphemy, sacrilege—"

"That's been said before. About the locomotive, the telephone, airplanes, radio, surgery."

"Yes, but—"

It went on for another two hours.

IN the end, I wore him down to a compromise. There was to be a pause, to think things over. The laboratory would be locked and he would not resume without notification to me.

We went, heavy-footed, down to the living-room. I lifted the telephone and said: "Long distance. . . . I want New York—offices of the Cunard White Star. Ring me back when you get them."

Court said, "Now what?"

"I'm reserving a cabin for the first

sailing we can catch out of New York," I said. "Get packed."

We crossed the continent by train. It was impossible to suggest flying, despite my anxiety to put half a world of land and water between him and that laboratory.

Conversation isn't my forte, ordinarily; but all the way across all the States, I talked. I talked plenty. I dilated on what we would do; made plans, changed them; pestered him for statements of his own ideas; raised questions, debated alternatives. First, I said brightly, two or three weeks in Paris, what? Hal Frevert was there, corresponding for a New York paper. We'd look the old scout up. And Pinky Matson, and Drew Patton, and Norman Carr. Then, maybe, a run over to Scotland. Inverness. There were some Mackinnons thereabouts that my father had kept touch with. Salmon fishing! We'd have such fishing as he'd never—

"I'll bet you don't know whether the salmon run in June or in November," he said. "You and your Mackinnons!"

I didn't. But I pounced on him. "Want to make something of it? A hundred bucks says they run in June, and the Mackinnons know them by their first names."

"All right," Court agreed listlessly. "You're on."

It was like that, all the way across. I couldn't get him interested.

There was a thirty-hour wait in New York, and I phoned an S.O.S. to Andy Hemple and Fred Hughes. The four of us staged it to a show, and got half tanked in a night-club. But I was determined that Court shouldn't backslide, if sticking to him could prevent it.

Even after we went aboard the *Queen Mary*, I didn't leave him for a second. We stood together at the rail, watching passengers and visitors staging the conventional hullabaloo of a liner's sailing. But when, amid a bellying of whistles, the pier slid away beyond jumping distance, I said: "I'm turning in. Catch plenty big sleep. How about that?"

"Go ahead," he said. "I'll prow for a while. I'm not sleepy."

The world blanked out for twelve hours. Even then, I struggled awake like a dead man coming to life. The *Queen Mary* was quivering under the drive of the engines, and rolling the least bit. I became aware that I was alone in the cabin, and that something white had been pushed under the door. A note.

When I had read it, I rang for the steward and asked: "Did you put this under the door?"

"Yes sir. The purser gave it to me, after Mr. Kane had gone."

"Gone?"

"With the pilot, sir. Mr. Kane left the ship with the pilot. He also left

the note, but saying you were not to be wakened."

"That's all."

I read the hasty scrawl again. It said: "Sorry, Ian. I can't stick it. This is the notification we agreed on."

I thought: This finishes us. If he can trick me like this—

WHETHER the salmon run at Inverness in June, or in November, or never, I still do not know. The three weeks in Paris of which I had talked lengthened to six. I was doing more drinking than I wanted to, and more of it alone than was decent, because I did not like to think, day-times, and I did not like the dreams that jerked me out of sleep and half upright in my bed at night.

Someone gave me a letter to Emilio Rossi, in Florence, and I went down there. It was a little better. I hung about his studio, watching him work, and trying—not very hard—to speak the language of the country. Emilio would put his hands to his head and roll his eyes and say: "For the love of God, speak English!" He said my accent hurt his ears. He was a grand guy. We got along fine.

One day, after working for a while in unaccustomed silence, he turned to me and said: "What feeds on you?"

He was a nut on American slang, and always got it twisted.

I said: "You mean, what's eating me?"

He nodded. "I have been watching. You have a bug in the hat."

"My best friend is doing a mad thing," I said. "I can't stop him. It worries me."

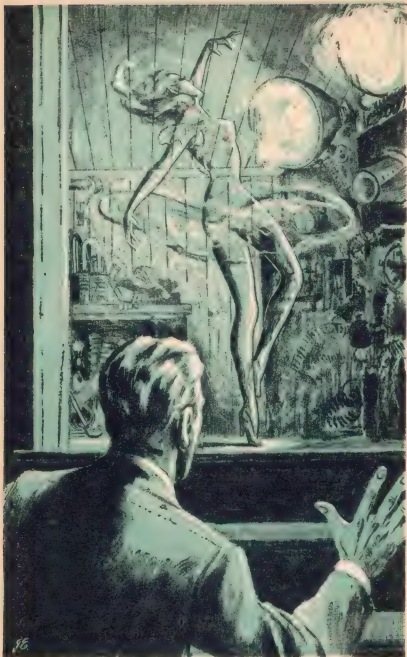
He put down his mallet and chisel and stood for a moment looking out of the window. "There are too many madmen. Up there"—he jerked a thumb toward the north—"are some who would set the world on fire again."

He hadn't said who the madmen were. You didn't, over there.

"Go home," he said. "Go while you can."

I knew suddenly that I had wanted for a long time to go. That now I must go, and quickly.

COURT had said the more powerful projector would take time to work out; there was a difficult cooling problem because of the Niagara of power he would have to pour into it. Much time had passed. It would have been reasonable to suppose that he had overcome the difficulties, and made his final trial. But an inner certainty having nothing to do with reason told me that he had not. With the first day of the homeward journey, a tension and a dread began building up in me: a premonition that I was going back into an ordeal I had tried to escape. Yet further flight from it was somehow ruled out for me.



I was seeing her wraith; it danced there, as her body had danced.

Court had taken from me my right to share in his life. In all these weeks no word had come from him. But now there was this compulsion to go back, to be there. How much of it was the pull of old loyalties, hard-dying affection, the hope that in some fearful moment he would turn again to me, and how much a fascinated circling back to predestined doom, I did not try to think out. . . .

The inner tension mounted steadily. In New York I caught the first trans-continental plane west. I was obsessed

with a conviction that I would not get there in time.

The culmination of all this haste was, naturally, completely banal. I scrambled out of the plane at the airport, impressed a taxi driver with the life-and-death necessity for speed, and at last dashed into the lobby of my apartment-house in Hollywood—to be greeted by the professional affabilities of the desk clerk. No, there were no messages. Visitors? None lately, that he knew of. Perhaps the day clerk—Oh, yes, quite a stack of mail.

In my rooms, I went hastily through the letters. The most important was from the tenant of a Santa Barbara business building I owned, saying the plaster was falling and would I come at once. I passed a bad night because a motionless bed had become something unnatural, and rose at daybreak to drive to Santa Barbara.

THE day clerk was on duty when I got back, in the late afternoon—the one with the wispy mustache and the look of perpetual surprise. He handed out a couple of letters and, as I was turning away, said: "Oh, I almost forgot, Mr. Mackinnon. That Jap was here again."

"Nogi?" I asked. A year back, I had thought I needed a servant, and after trying it out with Nogi had changed my mind.

"No sir, another one. He wouldn't leave his name. He was here about a week ago, too." The clerk smiled. "He acts like a scared spider."

"Okata!" I exclaimed. "Did he say what he wanted?"

"No, he just asked when you would be back. I told him I didn't know, because I thought you might not want to be bothered with him."

"Listen," I said. "Okata can see me any time. In the middle of the night, if he likes. Remember that—and tell the night man, too."

I went up to my rooms and sat down to wait. Okata might return.

But I couldn't sit still. The tension was back, tighter than ever. Court, if he wanted to reach me, would hardly send Okata. He'd telephone. Therefore, Okata had come on his own. He had refused to leave his name. That must mean an emergency of some sort existed.

But what? Okata knew nothing, cared nothing, about what went on in the laboratory. It was something else—something affecting Court, which Okata couldn't handle by himself. Illness? Probably not. Court kept his body in order because it was a necessary piece of equipment, like any of his machines. The only thing I could think of was that Court's mind might be going: that some stress was driving him into the madness I had predicted.

A ghostly specter rose again in the back of my own mind. What if, alone there in his laboratory, he had indeed created a monster? Some witless, soulless thing, endowed with unnatural life: shaped like Mona but horribly not Mona, not human, not even animal?

With the skin crisping along my spine, I pictured them—the half-mad man and the faithful little servant—tending it there in the locked and guarded house. Watching it, feeding it, performing nameless services for it: enslaved now to what could not be



From the driveway Okata and I watched the old house flare into flame.

allowed to die, and could not die of its own will.

The picture was too terrible to look at. Always, from the first, I had been fighting to keep it out of my brain.

For the dead are not meant to come back. Our deepest instinct warns us of it. Our coldest fear declares it. It was this I had tried to tell Court. . .

Seven o'clock came; eight; nine. I had not eaten, but I felt no hunger. A dozen times I reached for the phone, then halted my hand. Okata still might come. But suddenly I knew that he would not, could not. The afternoon visit probably had been almost impossible for him to manage. I lifted the receiver and called Court's number.

Okata's voice answered. I said: "Okata, this is Mr. Mackinnon. Did you want to see me?"

A confused clatter of language came over the wire. Okata was completely incoherent.

"Okata," I said. "Okata, listen! Don't talk so fast. Talk slow!"

Another volley. I could make out only bits of a long sentence: "... very bad thing . . . you come . . ."

I interrupted: "Listen, Okata! I'm coming. I'm starting now. Hold everything till I get there."

The drive to Court's place ordinarily took an hour. I made it in forty minutes.

It was a bright night of full moon. Pulling up a little distance from the

house, I saw that an addition had been built on one side—a sort of tall lean-to. Heavy cables looped into it from the poles of a new power line. As I got out of the car, a rushing, drumming sound began inside. For a moment I was cold with fear that this proceeded from operation of the new projector. But it was more suggestive of water surging turbulently through pipes, under heavy pressure. It cut off after about thirty seconds. The lean-to, I decided, must house electrical transformers, pumps, and incidental bulky machinery of that sort.

The laboratory windows were dark. On one side the moonlight fell whitely, and I saw that heavy board shutters now covered them.

Okata came hurrying down the drive. Evidently he had been watching for me. I drew him into the shadow of one of the old palm trees bordering the roadway.

The little man was in a highly nervous state, but by repeated questions, I got a picture of the situation:

For a long time, Court had been working very hard. On something big, Okata indicated—something filling one whole end of the laboratory. In the last two weeks, this labor had become a fury of effort. To all telephone calls Okata was ordered to reply that Court was out. The doorbell was not to be answered; no one admitted to the house. Court no longer shaved—Okata's hand swept cheeks and chin to indicate a beard—and slept only in snatches, without undressing, on an army cot beside his work. For a week, now, Okata had been denied access to the laboratory. He placed food inside the stairway door, on the bottom step. Sometimes it was eaten, sometimes not. During this last period, Okata had seen Court only once—he had opened the door to find him crouched on the steps, bolting food.

Here Okata became incoherent. Court's appearance, I gathered, had shocked him profoundly.

But this was not the worst. Since noon of the day before, the stairway door had been kept locked from the inside. Okata could no longer supply food, and no attention was paid to knocks or calls. He could hear Court moving about, but that was all.

BY now I was in a state of nerves rivaling Okata's. What was behind Court's frenzy?

I stared at the house, wondering what to do. It reared starkly, moon-smitten on one side, blackly shadowed on the other. All about, the derricks of the exhausted field towered. Only scattered wells still produced, and I could hear the faint chug and clank of their pumps, wearily laboring. From the house, no sound came.

Should I force my way into the laboratory, try to put Court under

*Illustrated by
James Ernst*



I wrenched . . . it refused to yield.

some sort of restraint? That certainly would mean physical combat. Then what? Attempt to have him certified as of unsound mind? Such a course would bring publicity, investigation, and finally the thing of all things most to be dreaded: the release of his knowledge to the world. Anyway, I could not do such a thing to Court. Yet something had to be done. Done by me. There was no one else.

The need to decide anything was suddenly taken out of my hands. The night was filled with vibration—a vibration which was there without any beginning. It was like the humming of the first projector, but raised now to the hundredth power, and with a jarring, grinding undertone as terrifying as the rumble of an earthquake.

What followed, I can relate only in the baldest words. Terms such as *saw, felt, thought*, have no application. I merely received a series of stunning impressions, and reacted to them with animal instinctiveness.

I RAN into the house, wrenched at the knob of the stair door. It refused to yield. I put a foot against the door jamb, pulled the bolt socket out of the wood, and rushed up the stair.

The funnel of blue light had established itself, sweeping outward from the enormous bulk of the new projector. Its brilliance was incomparably greater than before. It had a semi-

solid look, like a cone of intensely blue water. In its vivid focus, Mona—or the wraith of Mona—was dancing.

This time she was not transparent. Her body—what seemed her body—was there. With every moment it became more veritable flesh, more actual to my eyes. She danced there as any mortal girl might have danced. The drapery of her dress swirled about her, actual cloth, gleaming in the blue radiance. Had I been able to think in that moment, my thought would have been: Court has done it.

The dance ended. As before, the wraith of Court took shape, advancing into the blue cone. It seemed far less substantial than Mona's—perhaps because time, an interval of exposure to the blue emanation, was needed for the "packing" effect. And now a terrible thing began. From the opposite side, Court—the living Court—came into the cone. Simultaneously, wraith and man rushed upon the girl.

They coalesced, became one, as their arms reached for her. They stood, a single figure now, holding her embraced.

With a detonation like a lightning bolt, an immense sheet of green flame leaped from the vitals of the projector. Molten metal sprayed and ran in globules across the floor.

Stunned and blinded, I clung to the rail at the stairhead, covering my eyes with one hand. I had reached—passed—the limit of what I could endure to look at.

Something fell with a heavy crash.

Thirty seconds may have elapsed before I took away my hand. The laboratory was in complete darkness, except that at the far end, on the floor, puddles of solidifying copper glowed dully. An acrid odor of charring wood was in my nostrils.

My dazzled eyes still could make out nothing. Then flames sprang up from the edges of the copper pools, flickering an uncertain light. Court was lying, on his side and turned from me, in the central floor area. Of Mona, or what had seemed Mona, there was no trace.

I ran to Court, locked my hands beneath his waist, and lifted. My strength is great, and in that moment of terrific nervous tension it must have been that of three men. But I could not budge him. Also, his body seemed to have an unnatural rigidity.

While I struggled, the flames at the end of the laboratory caught the wall and ran up it. A flood of yellow light spilled through the room. I saw that Court's shoulder, in his fall, had crashed through the boarding of the floor.

And then I saw something lying on the boards beside him. My eyes told me what it was, but I did not believe them. I picked it up, turning it over in my hands, staring at it.

Then I dropped it to the floor.

I turned and went stumbling down the stair. To have remained another instant in that room would have unhinged my reason.

FROM the driveway, Okata and I watched the tinder-dry old house flare into a volcano of flame. Had the short-circuiting of the overheated projector not saved me the task, I would have set it on fire myself.

Of what happened to Court, I can give no positive explanation. It does not appear wholly logical—considering that Mona, despite her overwhelming semblance of reality, seems not to have been re-created in fixed material form. I say "seems not to have been," because I saw no trace of her after my interval of blindness following on the electrical flash. But the worst of all my nightmares is that somewhere, hidden among the shadows of the laboratory, she—

It does not bear thinking of.

In Court's case, I have at least the testimony of sight, of touch. And for explanation, I go back to what he said about the "packing" effect of the electron-blast from the projector: the building up of matter within a projected figure. It is to be remembered that his body coalesced, for perhaps thirty seconds, with that of his projected wraith; and this may well have doubled the malign potency of the electron-blast. The wraith and the man occupied the same volume in space, when at the last his hunger to hold Mona again in his arms drove him into the deadly zone of the blue light.

This seems to me a thing of great pathos. For I believe he felt that, from his arms, even death could not reclaim her. He knew what he risked. In that moment he was no cold brain of science, but only a mortal man; weak, suffering, loving and lovable, magnificent and unconquerable. It is so that I wish to remember him.

Sayonara, Court!

This remains to be told: When I tried to raise Court from the floor, his body was as rigid as steel. And I think, almost as heavy. Somehow his body had been "packed" with additional matter—matter flung into it by the projector. It was solidified, made heavy beyond all reason.

There is one further bit of evidence. The thing I picked up from the floor was Court's hand. It had broken off above the wrist, and come out of his sleeve, to lie quite separate from him.

The fracture was like the break of a glass rod. The severed arteries showed plainly—scarlet disks. But there had been no bleeding. Blood and flesh were as hard, as solid, as brittle as the bone itself. And that poor human hand was as heavy as if cast in bronze.

THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES CENTERING ABOUT A MISSISSIPPI RIVER GAMBLER IN THE WILD OLD DAYS WHEN POKER WAS PLAYED WITHOUT DRAW OR DISCARD, AND LIFE ITSELF WAS OFTEN A HAZARD OF THE GAME.

COLONEL PADGETT leaned against the bar. He was smiling, idly content with the world, his bold straight nose lending a keen aristocratic air to the smoothness of his tanned face. A huge diamond glittered coldly on his left hand, and he admired it for a moment before accepting the mint-top. I frosted glass.

"Your health, George," he said gallantly to the dark man behind the bar. "Your health, my health, and may both remain constant."

"Yassuh, Cunnel Padgett," the bartender agreed. "Glad to have you aboard again, suh."

Colonel Padgett beamed. "Thank you, George," he said. "Gambling is onerous, at best; there is no settling down, no wifely comforts, no prattle of children to brighten a man's life." He sighed. "It is a lonely existence, one I could not honestly recommend." He flipped a gold-piece onto the bar, covering it with his hand. "Heads or tails, George, double or nothing?"

"Heads."

Colonel Padgett uncovered the coin. "Tails!" he said triumphantly. "You lose." He shrugged wide shoulders. "You see, gamblers always die broke."

"Yassuh," George agreed, and paid the fifteen cents for the Colonel's drink from his own pocket.

Colonel Padgett beamed. It was not the amount he won or lost, it was the thrill of wagering which was his life's blood. Cards, dice, cock-fights or the alighting of a fly at a specified spot within a specified period of time, they were all the same. He gambled because the thought of doing anything else was anathema to his mind.

He could feel the mighty thrust and vibration of the steam engines deep in the steamer, and the splash and rush of water from the side wheels was a calming sound, for he was a river gambler, his office any deal table aboard any boat.

Finches' Landing lay behind now by a quarter of an hour, only a few passengers boarding, the stop really a station for loading cords of wood by Negro stevedores. Still, the sight of the girl who had come aboard had lifted light into his bland eyes. She was as trim a filly as he had ever seen, and he had liked the maidenly shyness with which she had averted her eyes from the over-sportive glance of the St. Louis drummer.

He could see her now, sitting at the rear of the saloon, a fat Negress for



The Colonel

her chaperon; and for a moment, he wished some kind god could whisk forty years from his age. She was quality, he could see that, probably going to N'Orleans for a visit.

She caught his glance, and he bowed gallantly, liking the smile of confusion which flushed her cheeks, and amused by the instant protective aggressiveness of the chaperon.

Others were in the saloon, but he ignored most. A couple of planters, the drummer from St. Louis and a couple of French dandies who eyed

the girl surreptitiously and who as obviously planned an attack to make her acquaintance.

THERE had been a young man with the girl; turning his head a bit, Colonel Padgett could see him standing outside the saloon at the railing. The lamplight touched the flat planes of his face, limning the profile, and the Colonel felt a surge of friendliness toward the youth. His own son, Bob, who was even now practicing law in New York, wasn't much older than

by WILBUR
S. PEACOCK



and the Lady

this boy appeared to be. And seeing the other at the rail, Colonel Padgett felt a brief surge of homesickness to see his son.

Bob had been his only family for twenty years. The plague had taken his wife, Mary, then, and now she slept in the tiny walled cemetery at the rear of the Church of the Lady of Our Miracle in N'Orleans. Flowers grew always on her grave and it was tended by skillful hands, for memories were dear to the Colonel, and none more respected than those of one

who had spent so few, and yet such happy, years at his side.

Colonel Padgett's eyes softened at the remembrance of his wife; Bob had curly hair like hers, and sometimes anger danced a saraband in his eyes as it had in hers when events did not justify their end. His practice was small now, but it would grow, for the boy had talent and ambition. Always he was writing for his father to live with him; but Colonel Padgett knew that such sedentary life would be his death-warrant. His veins held Missis-

sippi mud instead of blood, and the thrill of matching wits with other sharpers was a tonic to his way of life. Some day they would be together; but until then—well, river boats ran to Natchez and St. Louis and N'Orleans, and a man must follow the flight of his desire.

Colonel Padgett sighed and emptied the tall glass. So far, this trip seemed colorless: there were few aboard who seemed of the sporting type. Of course, many were still in their cabins and would emerge later. Yet even so, the Colonel had a hunch that this would be a pleasure trip alone.

"George," he said, and when the bartender looked up, laid a two-bit piece on the mahogany bar. "You shouldn't gamble," he warned.

"Yassuh, Cunnel Padgett!" George grinned, and the money disappeared. "I won't again, suh!"

In perfect understanding, they smiled; then Colonel Padgett turned ponderously from the bar and walked from the saloon. The swinging door creaked a bit on hand-wrought hinges, and then he was at the rail, leaning against a post and fumbling for a Spanish stogie. He bit the end of it thoughtfully, spitting the shreds of tobacco away. He lit a match, drawing deep of the smoke, and sighed contentedly.

The river moved by without sound, like a ruffled mirror of polished lead. Trees lined the bank, heavy with moss, and bullfrogs boomed a chorus of calls at the steamer. Water splashed from the wheels, and the smell of damp wood and river wetness was like the bouquet of rare old wines to the gambler's nostrils.

He heard the click of a cocking pistol, heard it and recognized it as naturally as a remembered voice. He used no gun, carrying none, as did many of the river gamblers. But still the sound was unmistakable. Stogie tight in suddenly still fingers, he went along the deck, strangely lithe and quiet for a man of his size.

He came to the cabin corner, standing silently in a shadow for a moment. He saw the young man he had noticed moments before—and saw the gun in his hand. He recognized the act for what it was. Cold horror touched him for a second; and then he was about the corner, darting forward. His right hand reached out and slapped, viciously and incredibly fast. Metal smashed against his palm; and then the pistol



She was quality, the Colonel could see that; he bowed, amused by the instant protective aggressiveness of the chaperon.

flashed briefly in the lamplight and was gone into the river.

"You young fool!" Colonel Padgett snapped. "Guns are for cowards, not men. You can solve nothing with a ball."

It was as though the man was dazed, held in thrall by the abortive ending to his act. His gaze went stupidly from the Colonel to the river and back again.

"How dare—" he began at last.

Colonel Padgett slapped the other twice across the face, not viciously, but in a manner calculated to drive calmness into the man's mind. He could feel the stiffness of the muscles of his own face, and the tragedy of the moment was like a stricture across his heart.

"What are you—God?" he snapped. "What divine right gives you the power of life and death?"

The man cried then, shaking and sobbing; and Colonel Padgett realized the other was hardly more than a

youth. Softness came to his mouth, and his hand touched the other's arm gently.

"Easy, boy, easy," he said. "Good Lord, nothing can be that tragic."

"Go away." The youth turned his back on the older man.

COLONEL PADGETT hesitated, then shrugged in wry impatience. "Let's hear the story, son," he said. "It will mean nothing to me, for I'm a stranger; and yet it might clear up a few of the things in your mind."

"No!" the other said. "Just leave me alone."

"Money? A woman?" the Colonel prompted. He smiled. "At your age, your problems can hardly go past those two."

"It's none of your business."

"Granted!" Colonel Padgett studied his stogie for a moment. "However, I'm a good deal older than you; I've probably met the same problems. I might be of some help."

The man turned, eyes dark and bleak in the lamplight. "All right," he said, "all right, I'll tell you. I've stolen three thousand dollars—money I can't repay."

"Three thousand, eh?" Colonel Padgett pursed firm lips. "Now that is a pretty penny."

"It really belonged to my sister," the other admitted. "It was her legacy from Father; she intended to open a Paris Fashion Shop in N'Orleans with it." His hands beat against the rail. "I wish I were dead!"

"And you stole the money and then spent it—is that right?"

The young man shook his head. "I lost it," he said. "I lost it at cards." He swung about, face suddenly hard. "They crooked me, using marked cards and signals."

Colonel Padgett sighed. Always was it like this with some men. If they won, they were clever; if they lost, they

had been crooked. The story, in all its ramifications, was old to him, incredibly old.

"It's possible," he said, "the cards ran to them."

"Cards!" The man laughed scornfully. He reached a hand into his side pocket and drew forth a deck of playing cards. "Take a look at these."

THE Colonel accepted the packet, touching them with familiar assurance. They were Queen cards, standard gambling cards sold everywhere. Without looking, he ran sensitive fingertips about and over them, searching, and found nothing. Holding them into the light from the saloon, he studied them expertly.

He found the shadings, even in the dim light, for he knew for what he searched. He read the backs as easily as he might have read the faces, despite the incredible cleverness with which they had been shaded.

"You see!" the younger man said. "I lost two thousand dollars with that deck. Then when I became suspicious and asked for a new deck, they used signals. I had been drinking and thought I could outplay them. Instead, I lost the money I held for Ruth."

"Ruth—a pretty name," Colonel Padgett said absently. "And how did you manage to retain these cards?"

"I switched decks, after the game," the other answered. "I switched decks so that I could study this one. I never found out the secret until a few minutes ago."

"And then you tried to kill yourself."

"I would have, but for your interference."

"And your sister would have preferred you dead; your death would have repaid her for her loss?"

"God damn you!" the young man said. "What right have you to say such things?"

"Me!" And Colonel Padgett smiled blandly, features lighted by the cigar's red end. "Why, I'm just a nosy old man to whom, at the moment, you owe your life."

"All right, it's yours," the other said in bitter mockery. "Now, what do you plan to do with it?"

Colonel Padgett frowned into the night. Silver moonlight mantled the shore, creating inky shadows, riding high on the waves swinging back from the side-wheeler. He had no ideas; after all, this was not his problem. And yet, remembering the youthful sweetness of the girl within the saloon, he was reluctant to withdraw.

"Who were the gamblers?" he asked.

"They called themselves Thompkins and Kleever. They're in Cabin B."

The Colonel shook his head; the names meant nothing to him. Still,

they could be new men to the river, gamblers he had not met before. Hundreds of immigrants were coming into the territory from the North and West.

He could feel the fat money belt at his waist. Almost five thousand dollars lay there, every dollar he owned. It was his stake, that and the huge diamond on his left hand, and that was worth another two thousand. Quixotically, for a brief moment, he thought of loaning, or giving, the younger man enough to repay the losses; and then he knew that such was not a solution. He would be out three thousand, and the youth would have learned nothing from the episode.

The youth was watching, and in his very posture was a growing belief and trust. Some of the tension was gone from his features, and his fingers no longer clutched the rail as though preparatory to hurdling it.

"Your sister doesn't know the money is gone?" the Colonel asked.

"No. She knew I was playing on the other boat, but not that I lost everything."

Colonel Padgett smiled suddenly, an idea growing and coalescing in his fertile mind. Somehow, the thought amused him.

"Could you bring her to my cabin, Cabin A, in a few minutes?"

"I suppose so," the youth agreed.

"But does she have to know—"

"She has to know," Colonel Padgett's friendly face was suddenly hard. "Now understand this, I'm willing to try to help you, but I won't cover up for your thievery."

The youth flushed darkly in the lamplight. "All right," he agreed. "I'll bring her in five minutes."

"Good!" Colonel Padgett turned away.

He returned to the saloon, pocketing the packet of marked cards and going straight to the bar. His bland eyes smiled at the room and his unlined face was placid. He was imposing,

Illustrated
by John
Fulton



Colonel Padgett smiled blandly. "Gambling is a lonely existence, one I could not honestly recommend. Gamblers always die broke."

his huge watch-chain swinging over his vest's wide expanse of flowered cloth. His hair was white, thinning at the crown, and brushed smoothly back from a high round forehead. His trousers were smoky gray, and his dark coat hugged the width of his shoulders smoothly. He looked exactly what he was, a big successful river gambler man.

"George," he said at the bar, "I have a desire to patronize the pasteboards. Surely there must be a bit of talent aboard?"

The Negro's eyes swung about the saloon, and he shrugged. "Nothing in heah, Cunnel, suh," he admitted. "But they's two gen'men in Cabin B; could be they might be ca'd men."

The Colonel flipped a four-bit piece onto the bar. "Rout them out, George, in any way you think best," he ordered. "I'll be back shortly."

He swung away, stealing one glance at the girl and her chaperon. The two dandies had retired in ignominious defeat and were pointedly ignoring the girl. The St. Louis drummer had decided discretion was the better part of valor and was industriously working on his order-books. The youth had come through the saloon and was talking with his sister. The Colonel smiled benevolently and passed through the door leading to the few cabins reserved for special passengers.

THE trouble with Colonel Padgett was that he had been exposed to honesty in his wife and had never fully recovered. It was difficult for him to recall a time when gambling had not been his profession and career. As a boy, tagging at his father's heels, he had fingered cut-down cards as some boys played with bows and arrows. His multiplication tables had been the shifting ones composed of the various odds relative to the winning of a wager. His father had died over a card-table when the Colonel had been fifteen, and from that day on, Jeremiah Padgett had declared himself a man and acted as one.

He had learned one lesson well: to be an honest gambler, a man must know how to be crooked. Few were the dodges he had not tried, at one time or another; few were the crooked ways that were not hidden in his keen mind. That he did not practice the black craft of his knowledge was because of Mary's influence; and as he became older, he had learned that playing odds was safer and more respectable in the long run.

But now, sitting in the single easy chair in his cabin, he poked a finger of thought back into his memory, wondering which technique would be the best to use. Thompkins and Kleever were to be mulcted of their ill-gotten gains, and the more speed with which

the deed was accomplished, the better everything would be.

Of course, the play would be honest at first; but if the others proposed to play crookedly, then the Colonel would oblige.

He liked the thought, and a Buddha smile lifted the corners of his mouth. He was the hunter in the chase, and he liked the rôle he played.

Fingers tapped lightly on the door, and he came quickly to his feet, crossing the room in three long steps. He was smiling as he opened the door.

"Come in," he said.

The girl came first, hesitantly, lines of strain on her face. Her brother must have told her of his thievery, for her face was flushed, and her eyes almost belligerent as she stared at the old gambler.

"I don't understand why—" she began, but the Colonel cut her short.

"There is nothing in particular to understand, my dear," he said calmly, "other than the fact that I wish to help."

He stood aside, waving the girl to the single chair. The youth shut the door, leaning broodingly against its solid surface.

"She didn't want to come," he said.

"Oh!" The Colonel nodded. "Well, miss, first may I introduce myself? I am Colonel Jeremiah Padgett, a—er—a professional gambler."

"A gambler!" The girl made as if to rise.

"Please!" the Colonel put in; and when she was relaxed again, he continued: "I do not know what your brother has told you, and that is unimportant. However, what is important is that he has lost your money. I propose to regain it for you over a gaming-table."

Skepticism flamed in the girl's eyes. "And why should you do that?" she asked. "What purpose do you have?"

"Please, Ruth," the youth said, "what does his reason matter? If he can nail those crooks, then let him do it."

Colonel Padgett smoothed his immaculate vest. "My purpose is selfish," he admitted. "If I win more than the three thousand, then the remainder shall be mine." He smiled. "If I lose, and I do not intend to lose, then the further loss shall be mine."

"But—"

"Ruth," the youth cried, "it's our only chance."

Colonel Padgett nodded. "I am afraid your brother is right," he said. "You have no recourse to law, of course. I am interloping, I must admit; but I think the end might justify my actions."

"Well—" The girl bit her soft lips. "It is most kind of you. It is only that—" She swung to her brother. "Jack, how could you have been so foolish!"

The Colonel spread his hands. "No recriminations, please," he begged. "You're young, and so I want to help. That's the entire story."

The girl dabbed at her eyes with a lace handkerchief. Her hair was a golden casque in the soft light, and the soft swell of her breasts made her very young and appealing.

"All right," she said at last. "And I do thank you, no matter the outcome."

"Good, then that's settled," the Colonel said happily. He swung toward the door, at the tap of knuckles. "Who is it?"

"Me, suh—Geo'ge," a voice answered.

The Colonel opened the door. The Negro smiled with a flash of white teeth.

"The gen'men would like to join you fo' a game of ca'ds," he said, and extended an envelope. "Theah so'ting out the mail below, suh," he finished, "and the Captain asked me to give you this, seeing as how you would get it in N'Orleans anyhow."

"I'll be right along," the Colonel said, and took the letter.

"Yassuh, Cunnel," the man said, and was gone.

Colonel Padgett glanced at the envelope. The letter was from Bob, postmarked only a couple of weeks before. Speed was certainly coming to the country. But since he had no time for letters now, the Colonel tucked the envelope into a side pocket.

"When we go back to the saloon," he said, "act as though we are strangers. After all, there is no point in frightening the sheep before they are sheared."

IGNORING their protestations, he ushered them from the cabin, waiting only long enough to make certain they were again in the saloon, before following. Big and solid, superbly sure of himself, he brushed open the saloon door and paced toward the green-clothed deal table opposite the bar.

"I am Colonel Padgett, gentlemen," he said to the three men already in their seats. "I understand you are looking for a bit of excitement?"

The nearest man glanced up. A cast in his left eye threw his gaze a yard to the Colonel's left. He was smiling, without warmth, the fringes of his mustache like the overhang of a badly trimmed brownish bush.

"I've heard of you, Colonel," he said. "But somehow, reputations never did scare me much."

"I'm sure they wouldn't," Colonel Padgett murmured, and pulled a chair from the table.

The second man giggled in a high tone like a girl. His skin was ruddy, slightly pocked, and his hair was greased to his head until each scalp bump showed plainly through the

flattened hair cap. His hands were lean and long, and cards riffled noisily as he shuffled and cut absently.

"Your money's as good as the next man's," he said.

The Colonel laid a packet of bills on the table. "It's waiting for a new owner," he admitted.

"My name's Cathcart," the third man said.

He was the youngest of the three, obviously added only to fill the table. He grinned at the big gambler, friendliness in his eyes.

"I sell shoes," he offered, "so I may not be able to keep up with you gentlemen. However, I've a hunch this is my lucky night."

"Good," the Colonel said, and sank into his chair, "but I'll take my chances." He beamed about the table. "What play?" he finished.

"Wide open," the cast-eyed gambler said shortly. "I'm Bart Thompkins, and I play pocket, not table, stakes."

"Suits me," the second man said, and giggled. "My name's Kleever."

"Pocket stakes, then," the Colonel said happily. Cutthroat poker was

his favorite; a man only stopped playing then when his purse was completely empty.

Cathcart broke new cards brought by the bartender, discarding most of the pasteboards, and riffling the rest in a smooth shuffle. The Colonel sighed gently and relaxed in his chair. This was life for him in all of its glory.

He glanced complacently about the saloon. The drummer and the dandies were already ranged close at hand, eager to watch the play. Jack sat by his sister, eyes bright with excitement, while the girl fanned herself gently, apparently bored at prospect of seeing a poker game. The chaperon sucked idly at a snuff-filled lower lip, perspiration staining her dark skin from the warmth of the evening.

COLONEL PADGETT winked surreptitiously at the girl and caught her tiny nod of assurance. He felt a measure of pleasure. The girl deserved a better break than her brother had given her; and if the Colonel could help, then help he would, to restore her lost money.

Cathcart smoothed the cards across the table for deal, and Kleever turned high. He caught up the deck and shuffled it with idle dexterity. Colonel Padgett admired his finger-work; the man knew cards.

The play began. But twenty cards were used, of course, for this was professional gambling, and each man used the cards dealt him. The side-wheeler moved ponderously down the river, dark banks gliding by, as though the boat itself stood still and the world moved. A mist had sprung into life, and the dismal wailing of the boat's horn sounded at regular intervals.

The Colonel faced Cathcart, with Kleever on his left and Thompkins on his right. It was a perfect set-up for the crooked gamblers to work a "raise and squeeze" play on their betting hands.

"For five," Thompkins opened, and the Colonel laid a bill on the board.

A pair of tens lay in his hand; not strong enough, but at least he could stay in until he had estimated the ability of the men. The betting was cautious at first, as it was when men first sat at a table. Kleever won with aces.

For a quarter of an hour the bets were small. Cathcart was slow, a bit reckless when a good hand showed. Kleever was a plunger, risking oversize bets on running bluffs. Thompkins was best of the three, his face absolutely blank of expression, playing

"I was to deliver this to you, suh," George said. "From that young lady."



his cards cautiously, risking no more than his hand was worth.

The Colonel grinned to himself; he had his opponents pegged now; after this, everything depended upon the cards. He called for drinks, George taking the orders and returning to the bar. Chipped winter ice tinkled in glasses.

The boat disappeared, as it always did; there was only the green-clothed table, topped by twenty cards. Men's hands moved with cards and bills, and faces grew tight at times, only to freeze into motionlessness when a player glanced up.

The play was ragged. No man held the advantage for long. Unlike the new game of draw poker, which was becoming more popular, this game was one of estimating odds for winning on a single dealt hand. The Colonel figured automatically and played accordingly.

Slowly the balance shifted. Bills began to drift to the Colonel's side of the table. Kleever no longer giggled; he played tautly, eyes flickering from the cards in his hand to the men about the board. Cathcart still grinned, pressing each hand he thought might win. Thompson bet and won, or bet and lost, without change of expression.

Colonel Padgett's winnings grew. Within an hour he was a thousand dollars ahead, most of it from Kleever's stake. The giggler was swearing now, under his breath, a third drink squatting before him on the table.

"Damn such cards!" he said at last. "Break a new deck."

THE Colonel relaxed while new cards were sorted and shuffled. He lit a Spanish stogie. The smoke was soothing; and idly glancing about, he saw that Ruth and her brother were smiling now, obviously pleased with his success.

The new cards were dealt. There was no longer an air of friendship and camaraderie about the table: this was poker now, played by gamblers; it was a scientific business, and as such there was no time for banter.

The scales shifted again, as it does in most games. Now Kleever and Cathcart held the cards, Thompson throwing his hand in again and again in quick disgust. Colonel Padgett watched his own stake begin to dwindle. The play was tougher, small bets forgotten. Cards riffled with brisk spurts of sound, then slapped with a bright small clatter on the cloth. Ice tinkled in glasses. Smoke layered from teeth-gripped cigars.

And still the play continued. The Colonel's stake was almost gone now, and he fished the rest from his pocket, balancing it in his hand for a moment. Kleever's luck continued, and then Thompson's changed, and Cathcart's cards fell off.



"I've had enough for the night, gentlemen," he said evenly.

Kleever shuffled, dropping two cards to the floor; muttering an apology, he leaned and fumbled for them. The Colonel grinned slightly; this was the play for which he had been waiting. The switch had been made while the giggler's hands were below the table. Twenty new cards, marked cards, were in his fingers when he straightened, and the old were tucked neatly in the top of his boot.

Kleever shuffled again, and the Colonel cut. Kleever dealt, and the Colonel felt no amazement when he saw the three jacks which were in his hand. This was the beginning of the pay-off.

He searched the cards surreptitiously with sensitive fingertips, looking for punches or nail-crimps or ridged design, and found none. Casually, he drew his cards together, back up, and

scanned them, even while betting. He saw the markings, after a moment, and elation touched his heart.

He felt a thread of sympathy for Cathcart, for unless the man could also read the cards, he hadn't a chance. The man played a steady game, except for his streaks of wildness when he held good cards. It was bad that he should be pinched. Still, that was a chance any man took in a game with strangers.

The Colonel played. He read the cards as best he could, not always able to when hands were not fanned. Slow anger burned in him, for he prided himself on his honesty at a table; and that he should be played for a sucker irritated him.

He won for a time, not large amounts, but steadily. Then, as



"In fact, I'm cleaned. Perhaps we'll meet another time."

though at some unseen signal, all luck disappeared. His stake went down bill by bill, hundred by hundred. Thompsons began to win, steadily, hand by hand, never changing expression, even when he raked in the pots.

The Colonel was down to his last thousand. He rolled a fresh unit stogie in his mobile lips. He had thought to beat the men at their own game, reading the backs of the cards; yet he was finding such a thing impossible.

He saw the pile of money before Cathcart, and realized for the first time that Cathcart's method of play had brought results. The man was far ahead of the game; in fact, he was the biggest winner.

The Colonel could see the scowls on Kleever's and Thompsons' faces.

He was down to his last eight hundred. Casually, he called for a new deck; and when it was brought, broke the seal and sorted the cards himself. These were good cards, unmarked; with them he stood a chance.

But with them he still lost. His eight hundred shrank to five, to three and finally to one. The play was big, opened for fifty and with a raise at the second man.

Thompsons raised again, and the Colonel hesitated.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it seems that I have overestimated my ability. My funds are gone; yet I wish to, at least, play this last hand. May I use this ring as cash?"

He heard the sudden movement at his back, and he knew that Ruth and her brother were about to protest.

Cathcart paused, glanced up, cards in hand.

The Colonel swung and smiled at the girl and her brother, conscious that the gamblers watched. The dandies were whispering in soft French, and the drummer, half drunk, leaned against the wall, watching.

"What's it worth?" Kleever asked.

Colonel Padgett shrugged. "I paid two thousand," he admitted. "I'll play it for half that."

Cathcart shrugged. Thompsons nodded.

"Make your bet," Cathcart said, and laid bills before the Colonel.

Colonel Padgett stripped the diamond from his finger, handing it to the shoe salesman. Cathcart laid it aside, almost absently, eyes bright now with the excitement of the play.

The Colonel made his bet. His cards comprised three tens, a jack and a queen. He rode it, figuring the odds in his agile mind. He raised, not calling, watching perspiration sliding onto Kleever's face. He could catch no signal between the man and Thompsons; and yet they raised each other's bets with a reckless confidence. Cathcart stayed in, playing his hand as before when the cards had been good, caught in a neat squeeze which meant he must keep feeding the kitty to protect his first bets.

There was a single bill before the Colonel when he called the last raise. Pocket stakes were the rule: when a man went broke, all betting ceased on that hand. Superbly confident, yet with breath-stilled for a moment, he spread his hand.

Kleever swore and threw in his hand. "Two stinking pair!" he said, scowling, and reached for the last of his drink.

Thompsons grunted audibly, his cock-eye swiveling in ill-humor. He chewed on the bushy fringe of mustache, one hand thrusting his cards, face-down, into those of his partner.

"My pot," the Colonel said complacently and reached for the money.

Cathcart's voice raised in a cry of triumph. "No!" he said. "My pot!" and laid three jacks, a ten and an ace on the table.

He raked in the bills, flushed with eagerness, fumbling them into a thick pad. His fingers were all thumbs, but they did what was required.

COLONEL PADGETT sat quietly for a moment; his left hand felt naked, and his pockets were empty for the first time in years. He was glad of only one thing, that Cathcart, and not the others, had won.

He moved back his chair, seeing the whiteness of the girl's face.

"I've enough for the night, gentlemen," he said evenly. "In fact, I'm cleaned. Perhaps we'll meet another time."

In wry humor he shrugged and went toward the bar. Laying his last bill before George, he accepted his drink automatically. Talk was at the table, the drummer offering to sit in if the stakes were lowered.

"Youh change, Cunnel," the bartender said.

Colonel Padgett pushed it away. "Buy yourself a new hat in N'Orleans, George," he said.

"Yassuh, thank you, suh." The Negro leaned forward. "I'm mighty sick 'bout youh losing."

"Gamblers always die broke," Colonel Padgett said in mock horror. "Don't ever forget that, George."

He hesitated at the door, looking back. He bowed with rare gallantry at Ruth and her brother, who watched silently from where they sat. He felt a twinge of pity for them, for he knew they'd counted upon his help. Well, they were no worse off now than they had been before; they would have to find some other solution to their problem.

Characteristically, he felt no pity for himself; he was a gambler, his day would come another time.

THE Colonel was finishing his packing when the boat docked at New Orleans. He could hear the singing chant of the roustabouts at their work; ropes squeaked, and the steamer was strangely still, its engines dead.

He strapped the last bag, trying to formulate plans in his mind for the future. He needed a stake, and there were friends who would give him that. Yet he knew he could not ask, even though him owed him favors.

His money-belt was flat against his belly; his side pocket held thirty dollars in gold-pieces. He could manage for a time, until he scraped up another stake. He almost laughed, knowing how Bob would take advantage of this situation to beg him to come to New York. Bob thought of his father as a recalcitrant boy who needed sheltering through life. And remembering how he had lost his shirt in the poker-game, the Colonel was almost ready to agree.

Thinking of Bob, he recalled the letter he had received hours earlier. It was crumpled a bit, and he smoothed the paper, tearing the envelope open and drawing out the closely-written sheets.

"Dear Dad," the letter began. "Well, it's spring again in New York, and while—"

The Colonel read avidly, chuckling at the humor of the lines, his pride in his son a tangible thing. Bob had the subtle wit of his mother. Law-cases were coming in greater numbers, well-known, even famous, people were asking for his services. Fees were larger now. In fact, why didn't the Colonel come North and enjoy—

The Colonel swung to the door at the tap of knuckles. George grinned through the opened panel, extending a letter and small box.

"I was to deliver this to you, suh," he said.

"From whom?"

"That young lady."

"Oh!" The Colonel smiled. "Thank you, George."

"Glad to do it, suh. And Mistuh Cunnel—" George twisted in mild confusion.

"Yes?"

"Well suh, if it's any help, I've got fifty dollahs that ain't—"

"Thanks, George. If I need it, I'll let you know."

The Colonel shut the door, touched by the offer of the man. Lord knew, fifty dollars was a fortune to the Negro. He sighed; friends cropped up in the damndest places.

He ignored the note and box for a moment. He leaned against the door, scanning the rest of Bob's letter. A smile touched his mouth, when the girl was mentioned. Bob was in love, deeply, youthfully in love, and with a girl who had vanished.

"It was horrible," the letter read. "I took the case, thinking it just another against the estate of a deceased man. My client sued for twenty thousand dollars, and he received judgment to that amount. I didn't realize until the case was over that the heirs were left paupers. When I tried to explain, tried to offer aid, her brothers threw me out, and the girl accused me of being an out-and-out crook, using legal chicanery to defraud her and her brothers. The case was honest, but—"

The Colonel grinned at the story. He turned the last page, reading slowly. The girl and her brothers had disappeared, and now Bob's law practice had become secondary for a time.

A name caught the Colonel's attention, a name and further facts. His smile disappeared, and for a moment he stared into space. Then he laid Bob's letter aside and opened the small box the bartender had brought.

His diamond ring lay glowing in a nest of soft white cotton.

He opened the note. A single sheet of paper was there, very severe and businesslike.

In account with the Padgetts:	
Item—Stolen from the Cath-	
cart by legal trickery.....	\$20,000
Item—Expenses incurred in re-	
covering part of same.....	1,000
Item—Repaid by Colonel Pad-	
gett in name of son.....	5,000
Balance owed	16,000

(Signed)
Ruth Cathcart

There was a single line of writing at the bottom, words inscribed in a neat feminine penmanship.

"Please advise Bob that part-payment has been made. We shall meet again."

Colonel Padgett felt the rush of hot angry blood to his temples. He swung the door open violently, and paced down the corridor to the door opening onto the deck. At the rail he stopped, peering along the lamplit dock toward the carriage stand.

He could feel the trembling in his great body. He saw the trio at the nearest carriage. He saw the girl and her younger brother and the tall trickster who had claimed to be a shoe salesman. He stared in heavy rage at the slim girl whose gentle manner and shy smile had lured him into a trap.

He remembered now how easily the suicide had been averted. He recalled how pat the story of the gambling loss had been. He remembered the trust which he had placed in Ruth.

And only too sharply etched in his memory was the way in which the girl and her brother had sat behind him at the poker table. They had been able to see his and Kleevers' and Thompkins' hands—that signals might be passed to the man who claimed he sold shoes.

Outrage beat at the Colonel's mind. He had been crooked, bilked as neatly as any greenie. His soft head had matched his soft heart, and now his money was with the Cathcarts.

Kleevers and Thompkins had been unknowing dupes, attracting his attention, while Cathcart pulled the dirty work. They had been the cover-up, while a girl and her two brothers lifted a small fortune from a gambler whose son had made the mistake of winning a legal battle in court.

For one moment Colonel Padgett's hand was a fist. He saw the light graceful wave of the girl's handkerchief in the lamplight. He saw it—and weirdly, for a second, it was Mary waiting for him after a river trip.

The anger faded. Faint, reluctant approval came to him, and after a time, a slow chuckle. God, this bit of baggage was a match for Bob, maybe even for himself. At least she had fire and beauty and a sense of ironic justice in her mind.

COLONEL PADGETT chuckled, waved his hand at the trio. Then he laughed as he leaned against the railing, watching the carriage driving off into the night. They were gone now, disappearing into New Orleans, an enemy who had declared warfare against him and Bob.

"All right, we'll meet again," Colonel Padgett said clearly into the night. "Yes, my dear, I think we shall."

He was whistling softly as he slipped the diamond ring onto his finger and returned to the cabin for his luggage. He was whistling, eager for the coming battle. And he was making plans.



It was not a job any decent soldier wanted, but it had to be done.

Proper Soldier

A MEMORABLE DRAMA OF PALESTINE TODAY, BY THE WORLD WAR I ACE WHO
GAVE US "THIS IS IT, PILOT" AND MANY OTHERS.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

THE finest compliment an Englishman can pay a fellow military man is to call him a "proper soldier."

Ernie was a proper soldier, from the tilt of his beret to his polished Army boots. Perhaps Ernie shouldn't have been out there. Perhaps a rule was ignored or broken; but at any rate, Ernie had an unenviable job. He had to be a proper soldier in Pal-

estine. He did his best; he looked his best; but as his pal Wonky Wills always said: "Some blokes just can't 'ave any luck!"

Things like this don't happen every day in Palestine, but they could; and perhaps a lot of people ought to think just a little more about both sides of a very bewildering question.

There are few baubles of military glory along the Haifa waterfront. Bat-

tles, sieges, raids, whether won or lost, ring with no lilt of trumpet or song. The unseen enemy hacks and strikes, but his blows produce no malice of retaliation. There is no thrill of a game, or the stern joy warriors feel in foemen worthy of their steel. Some will live through it, but they will be broken men. They'll huddle before home firesides, mutter over their wounds, tap furtively with their

canes—but they'll relate no tales of glory.

Political policy is more cruel than brute strength, contrivance sharper than action; and while direction is left to the commander, execution remains with the soldier, and for him there is nothing but the comfort of his conscience and pride in his appearance.

Nothing else.

Perhaps Ernie shouldn't have been out there. They say there are certain rules and laws for men of his category. But there are rules and laws everywhere, and some are observed and some are broken. Maybe the laws were drawn up after Ernie went on guard that night.

Who knows?

"**N**OTHING like a good pair of boots, properly worked in, properly cleaned and properly worn, to make you *feel* like a soldier," Ernie always said. He was proud of his No. 1 pair as he marched his beat before the ammunition depot that faced the Kingsway.

All the way out from England he'd boned and polished. He'd softened them with dubbin along the shanks. He'd given three-and-six for a tin of saddle soap to put a velvet finish on the insides; sat for hours, coming out on the boat, palming the excess oil out of the uppers, and thumbing in Wren's boot polish. Now they glistened like saddle leather. He could have done forty miles in them boots, he could. Full pack and all!

Left-right! Left-right! *Crash! Bash!* The heels came down with regimental assurance. The Drill Pig who had taken him over after he had been called up was still inside him, chanting the commands. Proper soldier, the Drill Pig. Got a D.C.M. at Mons. That was the *other* war, mind you. Right from the start, the Drill Pig had a twinkle in his eye for Ernie's boots. "Pick 'em up and smack 'em dahn," the Drill Pig had always said. "Then they'll know that you're there—and when they *know*, that's all there is to it."

Ernie knew he looked the proper soldier. He'd planned it that way for years. Fate and Time hadn't been exactly kind, because he'd missed the real war. He'd liked to have been with Monty in North Africa, but he had been only fifteen then. There wasn't *really* a war on out here in Palestine, but it was hardly an August Bank Holiday show. Still, he knew he looked smart. Just the right height for a soldier. His helmet was tugged down properly; his web equipment brushed and blanched till there wasn't a sponge mark on it anywhere. Trousers properly creased and folded into the top of his blanched gaiters, so that they broke just at the right place.

Left-right! Left-right! Left-right!



Ernie never talked about Bertha much—not to Wonky, at any rate.

Ernie came to the end of his post, heels crashing to a halt. He spun smartly, right heel and left toe.

"*Hor-dee-h'arms!*" the voice of the Drill Pig echoed in his skull. Maybe Ernie was whispering it to keep the timing right. His left hand lowered the rifle; his right snapped across his body gripping the Lee-Enfield at the sling swivel. His capable hands brought the weapon across as clean as winking. The butt went down with a businesslike crash the proper distance from his right boot. There was an answering crash from Wonky Wills at the other end of the depot post.

That showed they'd timed it right. Shows proper Guards training, that does. Even though the Steelbacks were only a county line regiment, what did it matter? If they were trained by the Guards, they ought to be just as good as the Guards, hadn't they? Proper soldiers, the Steelbacks. "*Stand-at-Tease!*" the command came again. Left foot over half a pace and the rifle eased forward, left hand comfortably behind the small of his back. It felt good in proper boots and kit doing a guard show, even though it had to be out here in Palestine when it could just as well have been Berlin or Bermuda.

HIS eyes swept his front. Ahead he could see whitecaps dancing over the breakwater. The lights of the ships riding at anchor bobbed and winked at him. The dull outline of a sambuk with a lateen sail disappeared behind an American tanker. There was a smell of soap and olive oil in the air, and during his twenty-four-hour guard duty, the sea had changed from gray to mauve, and under the noonday glare went from azure to lapis lazuli.

Ernie didn't like looking at the water and the ships. It reminded him of the immigrant vessel they had taken over and guarded the week before. That didn't seem like proper soldier's work, trying to look stern and military-like, when there were so many women and children aboard. It was like Major Peckham had said—not a job any decent soldier wanted, but it had to be done. The Steelbacks had tried to be nice and friendly about it. Ernie had even carried a baby down the gangplank. Almost handed the mother his rifle, till he reasoned it wouldn't look soldierly. Then he had offered one of the prisoners a packet of fags. Chap just looked at him proudlike and refused them. Ernie figured he must have misunderstood him, but there was no mistaking the way the chap stared at him and then spat over the side.

Ernie tried to forget all that, and think about the trip he'd planned the next day up Mount Carmel. His

father had written and told him he ought to go up and see Mount Carmel, because that was where Elijah's sacrifice was burned by fire from heaven. His father knew all about such things in the Holy Land.

But the soldier in him came to the fore again. He listened for Wonky's signal. It came with a sharp metallic clank that echoed along the pavement bordering the compound.

"*Ten-shum!*" the voice of the Drill Pig broke in. The boots came together with a crash. The rifle was snapped in close.

"*Slerr-ope, h'arms!*" The rifle shuttled across his chest, the butt dropping into his cupped left palm.

Ernie spun on his left heel and faced his beat again. He caught Wonky's heel-crash signal, and the stolid stride renewed its clangorous thud.

"*One-two! . . . Left-right!*" Ernie set the cadence, his polished heels beating the slabs like mechanical hammers. He could hear Wonky's strides approaching, and they had to time their march so that they met exactly at the light standard. They weren't supposed to, but Wonky had persuaded him there was no harm in it. Wonky was shorter than Ernie. He couldn't stop a pig in a passage, and Ernie had to check his stride the instant Wonky appeared around the bend of the ochre-colored wall.

"Come on, Wonky. Come on," Ernie breathed. "One, two, three, four. . . . Halt!"

The two sentries met a pace apart in the circular pool of light under the arc lamp. Wonky was grinning as usual. "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there," Wonky began, "wiv me blanco and button-stick!"

"Stow it, Wonky," cautioned Ernie. "You'll be booked, you know, carrying on like that."

"'Ow would you like to be up Abington Park tonight, Ernie?" the irrepressible Wonky whispered. "I mean in yer civvies, and a tart on yer arm?"

"Why don't you act sharp?" Ernie admonished out of the corner of his mouth. "You can't tell who's hanging about."

"Naol!" Wonky muttered. "Might be 'arf a dozen of them Irgun blokes just across there in the shadows. A bit of wire an' a quick twist, Ernie—and you'd never know what 'appened."

"You take care of your bit. I'll look after mine," said Ernie apprehensively, as the boots began their rhythmic pounding back toward the gateway.

ERNIE really hadn't seen much of the war. There were no military "incidents" to speak of in Northampton. Once one of the buzz-bombs, miles off

its course and wildly out of control, dropped in the grounds of the Convalescent Home, frightening everybody half to death. But Northampton hadn't copped it like Coventry or Liverpool, and in a way the Northampton people felt out of it until they thought about the Army boots they had produced for the Allies.

You couldn't take that away from them.

Ernie had done his bit in Burch's shoe factory, "taking on" soon after he turned fourteen. Burch's were swamped with contracts and were glad to have the boy. He started in opening channels for the well-sewers. From that simple task, he moved up to the heeling machine, feeding nails into the patterned hopper as it spun from the press arm.

It was exacting and detailed work that had to be performed at high speed, but Ernie had good eyes, and his fingers moved like the shuttles of an intricate loom. Ernie did his job properly, and with the unquestioned loyalty of one who had sprung from a dutiful root.

It was at Burch's he picked up the love of leather and the science of shoes. You could tell by the way he lifted a pair and matched them. Ernie caught on like lightning. He could match a pair just by lifting them by the backs and looking down on them. It was a matter of comparing welts, the lasting and the way the uppers were closed, and the bulge of the heel stiffeners.

Ah, there's nothing like a fine pair of boots. You know the minute your fingers grip and take to the contour of the instep. It was the way Ernie handled shoes that inspired them to put him on the edge-trimmer. It is said edge-trimmers are born; they have it in their hands, to the tips of their fingers, and a foreman knows the instant a lad picks up a "right" and applies the sole to the trimming wheel. Anyone can trim a "left," but it takes a born artisan to put the edge on a "right."

And they're artisans at Burch's—not cobblers.

They say St. Crispin smiled when Ernie put his first trimmed shoe in the rack, and well he might. The patron saint of the boot-and-shoe industry hasn't smiled much since machinery came in.

Of course Ernie had no idea who St. Crispin was, even though he worshipped at his shrine and bowed a curly head for his benediction on Saturdays—at the pay window.

AT the gateway Ernie halted, ordered arms again and stood at ease. With a cautious glance around, he checked his front and then looked down and studied his handiwork of that morning.

The boots gleamed where he'd pricked up the stitches around the edges. With a toothbrush and a small bottle of gum arabic, he'd brought them up so they gleamed white and virginal. A bit of heel-ball wax he'd brought along in his kit had been applied to the edges, and finished off with the back of an old teaspoon warmed over the flame of a candle. Looked like new, they did. Proper soldier's boots.

He thought about Wonky and what he had said about being back home and messing about in Abington Park. But what could you expect from a chap whose people were in the pork-pie business? Wonky had no use for the Army. Wonky was a dabster with the girls. Always had been. Always managed to say the most amusing things. Give him a night at the pictures with Cary Grant or Bob Hope, and Wonky was set up for weeks. Then again, if he'd been to one of them technicolor musicals, he'd come home singing every song word-perfect.

Proper card was Wonky!

BUT out here in Palestine, Wonky was always for it. Didn't seem to realize what he was here for. No sense about him at all. Sergeant Mycroft didn't know what to do with him. Gave Wonky all the chance in the world to jerk himself together, but where there's no sense, you can't expect no reason. Wonky would wind up in quod one of these days.

You'd think Wonky would have a bit of *esprit de corps*. It wasn't as though he was in some shove-a-penny mob, a ragtime regiment what had no tradition. The Steelbacks—that's what the other regiments called the Northampton—the Steelbacks had been a regiment since 1740, they had. Battle honors as long as your arm. Somebody ought to name a packet of cigarettes after them. No feather-bed soldiers, the Steelbacks. . . . They had fought at Louisburg, Quebec, Talavera, Sebastopol, South Africa, Mons, Aisne, Ypres, Neuve-Chapelle—and Lord knows where in Hitler's war.

Ernie wondered whether they'd put Palestine on their battle flags.

But fancy old Wonky wanting to be back home—in civvy clothes and arming a tart about the Park! Of course, Wonky didn't know how to wear a beret or press a battle jacket. Wonky didn't know how to soak his beret in warm water and pull it properly in shape over his knee until it took on that "old soldier" touch. Wonky just took it from the Supply Sergeant and stuck it on his head.

All Wonky thought about was getting into the wet canteen and guzzling Wog beer.

Ah, well, it takes all sorts to make a regiment. There certainly were all sorts reporting the day Ernie was

called up. That was just one year after V-E Day, and perhaps it did seem a shame that Ernie had to give up his job at Burch's, but he reasoned it out: A lot of chaps were coming back who'd been at Dunkerque and at Tobruk, and some of them had been prisoners of war. It was only right they should have their old jobs back while the youngsters went out and took over from there. Besides, things had slowed up a lot, and there weren't many Army boots to be trimmed.

Ernie's father and mother had worried about him, of course, Ernie being what he was. It didn't seem right that Ernie had to go now. Their Ernie had been a good boy. Brought all his money home and had never got into any trouble—with girls or anything. They'd taught him what was right and what was wrong about that. He was all they had, outside of the little business on the Market Square. Ernie almost convinced them he'd be all right, laughed and said a bit of travel would do him good. Then when he told them about Palestine, the old black fear—the black fear they'd banished years ago—came back in a torrent of strangling horror.

Ernie had wanted to join up, all along. He'd watched recruits in the newsreels and seen them clumping along the back roads of Kingshorpe banging down their boots and singing at the tops of their voices. Then there was a Commando training course out toward Duston, and Ernie had often wished he could have a go at it—clambering up the ropes, swinging along the ladders and throwing himself over brick walls. It looked like a treat, and Ernie couldn't wait. He'd secretly hoped old Hitler would try an invasion. Then they'd have to let him have a go. After all, he was a Boy Scout and knew how to carry messages and give the proper salute. Their Troop truck had collected fats and bones, and they'd marched and formed honor guards when anyone important had come to Northampton.

Come to think of it, that was when Ernie first got the urge. A local chap had won the V.C., and they were meeting him in at the station. That morning his dad mended his boots and put on a pair of heavy heel plates. The boots were blacked and polished until Ernie could see his face in them. He couldn't wait to get outside and go *Bash! Bash! Bash!* along the pavement—just like a real soldier!

ERNIE caught Wonky's signal again. He jerked to attention, shouldered arms and began his sentry-go once more.

Left-right! . . . Left-right! . . . *Crash! Bash! Crash!* The boots came down with authoritative thuds.

Wonky was approaching the light standard again. He was timing it

worse this time. Even though he was only a murky outline in the oily night, Ernie could see his helmet was all over the place, and the belt end of his battle jacket was loose and flapping.

The voice of the Drill Pig took over again in Ernie's head.

"Guard—halt! . . . Right turn! . . . Steady!"

"Why couldn't they 'ave sent us to Egypt—or Kenya?" hissed Wonky as they held their sentry pause before starting back. "Bloody West Kents packed off to Malta just before we came 'ere. But no such luck for the Steelbacks! We click for Haifa, we do. Wonder if they'll issue a medal for this Palestine ramp."

WINCING at that, Ernie repeated: "Stow it, Wonky! We'll get coppered. Wait until we're relieved before you start gassing." Pivoting sharply, he started his march back.

Ernie hated to think of Palestine as enemy country, but he would have liked a ribbon for his battle jacket. Nothing like a bit of color for finishing off a proper turnout; but blokes like him, called up after V-E Day, weren't entitled to campaign ribbons. It wasn't as though this was a cushy job, either. Already half a dozen of this new lot had copped a packet from the Irguns or the Stern gang. Three of them blown up in a ratings truck the first afternoon! Then there was Dusty Simmons a week later—blown to bits with a gas-pipe bomb, when all he was doing was going to the Salvation Army hut to practice for the Easter service. Still had his music in his hands when they picked him up.

Ernie thought it was odd, all this unpleasantness when the real war was over. He supposed there was a lot of misunderstanding and arguments on both sides; but even Mr. James, the Political Officer, didn't make it very clear. It was as if he wasn't sure himself. He kept harping on the fact that Britain still had to hold on to Palestine to protect its own political and military interests.

Ernie would never forget the day he got up and asked Mr. James why Britain didn't clear out and let the Arabs and the other chaps settle it amongst themselves.

At first Mr. James was very nice about the question, and said it wasn't as simple as all that. There were other interests to be considered, and the Steelbacks were there to see that these interests were protected. Then Mr. James looked hard at Ernie, and said something about not letting our own personal prejudices warp our judgment—and everybody'd laughed. Mr. James went on to say—talking directly to Ernie—that the Steelbacks had come out to do a job. It was an honest job, and they'd all come as honest men, to do it.

Everybody seemed to be looking at Ernie while Mr. James went on.

"Remember, chaps, our hands are clean in all this mess. We know what Mr. Balfour said in 1917. He clearly stated: 'His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.' Now Mr. Balfour said in Palestine, but that doesn't mean we have to come along and chuck everyone else out. We also owe a debt to the Arabs, who helped us chuck the Turks out of the Holy Land in 1917."

Mr. James went on like this for hours, and Ernie wished he'd never brought it up. It was like trying to understand bits out of "King's Rules and Regulations." It was all too wordy and legal-like. Empire life-line—the Partitioning Plan—League of Nations Mandate—Jewish Executive Agency—Dissident members of the Hagana.

But when Mr. James went on about booby-traps, gangsters skulking in the darkness and treacherous stabs in the back, Ernie sat trembling. Mr. James said as how the Steelbacks were out there properly dressed in uniforms with regimental badges and proper military insignia on their sleeves. That made Ernie feel good. He was one of the blokes Mr. James was talking about. Proper uniform, proper boots that fitted, and made you march properly.

Ah, you can't beat being a proper soldier!

But then Mr. James spoiled it all again by pointing out that the Irgun blokes and members of the Stern gang didn't play the game that way. Oh no, that wasn't their code! Rubber-soled shoes, and long knives that would take a man's head off with one swipe. Dirty underhanded methods to take an unfair advantage. No identifying badges or insignia. No rules or regulations. No strict international code. Bombs in parcel-post packages and innocent people wiped out. Then they'd clear off, and there'd be no way of putting the blame where it belonged. Old Hitler would have taken hostages by the dozens and wiped them out, but proper soldiers couldn't use those methods.

Ernie almost wished he'd talk about venereal disease or the identification of enemy weapons. . . .

He reached the gateway, clumped to a halt, pivoted to his front and ordered arms. His eyes swept the outline of the harbor activities and he wondered where that sambuk went to. There were dull glows of lights swinging above open hatches. He caught the rattle of chain, and the throaty chug of machinery. There was a sweetish smell in the air, but it in no way relieved the tension that



Wonky didn't cry a challenge. There was something spotty somewhere.

always clamped down at this time of night. Fair gave you the creeps, it did. A sweet smell—but nothing like primroses. Made you see and hear things that weren't there.

It was a proper relief to snap to attention and begin marching again. Well, another three-quarters of an hour, and he'd be relieved, and he could slip into the guardhouse and doss off for four hours—well, just over three, anyway. He'd have to be up in time to swill and shave, clean his kit again, brush his boots and run the oil rag over his rifle. They'd be relieved by eight in the morning, and then perhaps he'd be able to kid Wonky into going up and have another look at the city from Mount Carmel.

Proper holiday you could make of this if you worked it right. Keep up appearances, keep out of trouble, and it could be a useful experience. He wished he could explain that to Bertha, but somehow he could never think of the proper words when he was writing home—what with old Wonky always larking about.

ERNIE glanced down at his rifle and made certain his short sentry bayonet was still secure. At his wrist a gay gleam flashed off his silver identification bracelet.

Bertha had given him that, the night he left. Not that he needed

anything as expensive as that. They'd issued him with two stamped fiber discs which he wore around his neck on a bit of cord; but it was something to remember Bertha by. Must have cost her a pretty penny, too. Real silver and properly engraved with his name and number, his regiment and religion—just in case.

Ernie never talked about Bertha much—not to Wonky, at any rate. Wonky always made snide remarks about girls. Always asking questions that made Ernie go cold inside. Bertha wasn't that kind of girl. She somehow made you behave yourself without her even saying a word about it. When you were with her, you somehow remembered all the manners your mother had tried to teach you. Like taking off your hat, and standing up at the proper time. Being careful of what you said, and thinking things out beforehand so you wouldn't hurt anyone's feelings.

Bertha was young, hardly nineteen. She had deep brown eyes and long beautiful lashes set in an olive-complexioned countenance. They were alert eyes, and were always answering questions kindly. But it was her voice that always left Ernie with a full throat. Her voice was like her eyes, deep, and yet so warm.

There were times when Ernie wondered whether he owed the decent

things in him, the decent thoughts, the decent gestures, to his mother or to Bertha. Bertha always seemed to know what he was thinking. At first it bothered him—like when he suggested that they ride home on top of the tram where it was dark. Bertha laughed and said she wanted to do that too—but not for the same reason. Bertha said she liked to look down on the streets now the lights were on, because from up there everything seemed like fairyland, and it reminded her of the curtain just going up at the theater.

Their introduction had been very proper—through mutual family associations. It happened following a marriage ceremony. There was a bit of a reception, once the formality had been observed. Where the tea and bread-and-butter came from, no one seemed to know. No one cared, once Bertha began to play the piano. It seemed she lived just around the corner. Ernie began to talk nineteen to the dozen. He liked her hair, and the frilly bits at the edges of her sleeves.

Bertha's eyes answered his every inquiry; and wonder of wonders, they discovered they both worked in the same factory! Bertha was a fitter in the closing-room, a piecework job where the girls cemented the parts of the uppers together before they could be stitched on the machines. They laughed when Ernie said he remembered now! Some of the shoes he had trimmed didn't smell like shoes at all. They had smelled like a field of primroses!

The next instant Ernie wondered whatever made him say that.

BUT Bertha knew: and from then on, they were drawn to each other—unquestioningly obeying the caprices of Fate, not simply building their castle in the clouds, but already wandering hand-in-hand through its corridors. They simply built hopes higher and higher, never doubting a postwar basis would sustain their golden towers.

When Ernie was called up, neither considered the barrier monumental. What tinge of melancholy either suffered was banished whenever Ernie came home on his week-end leaves. Ernie in his new uniform, his erect smartness and the proud pounding of his Army boots. Bertha matched his appearance with laughing eyes, her riotous curls and a new starched blouse. After all, the lights were on again, and the War was over. The blackout panels were down, and the glittering highway of dreams spread invitingly ahead.

But the black sorrow was to strike. During his draft leave, Ernie told Bertha he was being sent to Palestine. In Ernie's strained mirth there was little consolation.

"Not to Palestine!" Bertha protested as the tears welled up. "They can't send you out *there*, Ernie."

And Ernie laughed, and almost said what Wonky always proclaimed: "There's only one thing the Army can't do to you, and that's—" But Ernie would never say things like that in front of Bertha.

He kissed her instead, and they walked about all night in the rain. Bertha was ashamed of her fear, but there was no hope in any of the passages of her imagination.

The wound throbbed and ached as they huddled in the shadows of the Castle Station waiting for the train that would carry Ernie away. Bertha held his hand against her wet cheek while she snapped on the identification bracelet. He whispered his kisses, ran his fingers through her curls and kept saying it wouldn't be for long. He'd be home again for a fortnight's leave within eighteen months. A year and a half would go in no time. He'd have a few quid in his kick by then—and who knows?

Bertha smiled her trust and pressed her fingertips over his curved eyebrows. He held her close, closer than he had ever held her before.

Palestine was worth it!

"**W**ELL, let's get on with it," Ernie muttered, recoiling to attention. He spun smartly to his left and renewed his resounding vigil.

Left-right! Left-right! *Crash! Bang!* His right arm swung forward stiff and formal. He caught himself tat-a-tattarring a marching song:

We proudly point to every one,
Of England's soldiers of the King!

If only old Wonky would try to march like that and keep in step with a clanking good tune, he'd look better, and he'd time it properly. But you know Wonky. Couldn't carry a tune in a kit-bag if you rolled it up for him.

Here he was, coming along as though he had all night, his rifle somewhere around the back of his neck. Of course he was tired. Anybody would get tired after two hours of this, but he could try to be a proper soldier and keep his end up.

Wonky was a pace and a half behind when Ernie stepped into the light under the lamp.

"I shall be glad when this night's over," Wonky grumbled when he waddled to a halt. "Might just as well be doin' ten days' pack drill. Up and down—up and down; and the worst of it, there's nobody 'ere to tell you to. Just like a bloody fool you go trampin' back and forth—back and forth, when you might just as well be down Sheet Lane."

"Put a sock in it, Wonky," said Ernie. "We've got only a few more



A loop of piano wire dropped

minutes. Come on. Let's show 'em how we finish."

Ernie winked encouragingly, slapped the flat of his rifle in mock salute and spun on his heel.

"See you in the guardhouse," Wonky answered.

Ernie started back, his boots crashing and echoing against the raw sable night. Wonky tottered around and started off in the opposite direction.

"Proper soldier, old Ernie," he muttered. "Proper loves to bang his plates of meat down, don't 'e? 'E'll wind up wiv bunions, that bloke."

Then Wonky stopped. For Ernie's pavement-pounding had come to a quick halt. Wonky turned back and started running.



over his head, was jerked tight. Ernie coughed once. Then a long sliver of pointed steel was rammed home.

Ernie hadn't seen the Irgun bloke glide out of the shadows. His clattering stride—*Bash! Crash! Bash!* had obliterated the stealthy tread of the attacker.

A loop of piano wire dropped over his head from behind, was jerked tight. Ernie coughed once. A long sliver of pointed steel was pressed up against the base of his skull and rammed home. A silent explosion between his ears swept him to Eternity. A hand reached around and caught his rifle before it struck the pavement. Ernie was dropped against the wall.

The others were starting across the road with a small hand-cart. All they had to do now was to run it in the

gateway and light the fuse. It would have taken only a minute. . . . But you know Wonky!

Private Wills didn't bother to cry a challenge. There was something spotty somewhere. He couldn't hear Ernie's boots bashing up and down. Even Wonky had certain standards.

Wonky dropped to his knee. "Five rounds—rapid!" he ordered himself.

The safety went off, and he opened fire.

The Irgun blokes never reached the gateway. Wonky was a bit of a dabster with a rifle. Always was. Five rounds rapid, and they were stretched out kicking all over the place.

"Wot's going on out 'ere?" the sergeant of the guard demanded, waving

his torch and buttoning his trousers. "Guard turn out!" he yelled. "Who's this over 'ere?"

"That's Ernie," explained Wonky. "They snaffled poor old Ernie."

The sergeant of the guard turned his light down on the prostrate sentry. Ernie's face was blue and his nose was bleeding. The beam fell on Ernie's identification bracelet. The sergeant knelt to feel his pulse and read:

Ernest Epstein, 97,767
Northamptonshire Regiment
HEBREW

"It just goes to show yer," observed Wonky, sitting in the gutter, a very unmilitary figure, "some blokes just can't 'ave any luck."

A Kayo for the

IT was a cold winter, in 1939-'40. In December, Fritz Kuhn was sentenced for forgery and grand larceny, the League of Nations died over Finland vs. Russia, Harry Bridges was ruled not a Communist, and Jacob Ruppert died full of honors. Midstate College sat tight to the frozen earth, the squat buildings which had been a seminary now housing sturdy young men, many of whom were, not by coincidence, athletes of sterling worth.

Babe Young said to the slim girl in the inexpensive fur coat: "Let's try skiing. People are skiing and it looks like flying." His gray eyes were merry; the football season was ended, and he could relax. Carrying the load for a small team determined to hit the big time and put the college on the map had put lines in his young countenance. He was almost twenty, but he looked older, and his slenderness was already marred by bulky shoulders and in one knee the cartilage mildly protested.

She said, "No basketball, Babe?" "You ever see me play basketball? I got a natural instinct for blocking," grinned Babe. They stood in an angle of the Quad, and the wind whistled past them and indeed about their well-clad legs, but they did not notice. She was seventeen; they were holding mittened hands.

She said: "John Fort says we must keep Midstate in the public eye all year round. The basketball team is not so good."

"It would be worse with me on it," said Babe. "Let's go see 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington' tonight. This Stewart is a killer. Just a natural kid, even if he did go to Princeton."

A tall, heavily built man in his mid-twenties started past, leaning into the wind. It was John Fort, athletic director of Midstate. He caught sight of Alice Hale and Babe. He paused, as though under compulsion, and came into the shelter of the building. He said in his intense, dictatorial voice: "Young, report to the gym after classes. Boxing-team tryouts."

Alice Hale, daughter of President Hale of Midstate College, removed her hand from Babe's. At seventeen she was self-conscious, and fully aware that John Fort felt more than an avuncular interest in her. She said involuntarily: "Oh, no. Not boxing. Not Babe."

Fort turned his cold, severe eyes upon her. He was a handsome man,

with regular features slightly blunted by strenuous athletics. He said to Alice: "I was heavyweight champion of the Federation for three years. It is an excellent sport. Young refuses to try for basketball. Mr. Mordant is still—er—taking care of all the athletes. Your father—"

Babe said: "I'm no fighter, Coach." Impishly he added: "Maybe I'm more the lover type."

Alice gulped. "I have some book work to do. . . . Excuse me." She fled.

Fort said: "Young, you are always insubordinate. Mr. Mordant favors you, or I would take steps. . . . I take it you are afraid to try boxing? You think your face should remain as is—for the sake of your amatory activities?"

There was no mistaking the biting enmity of the older man. Babe leaned against the building. He had one great gift: he could get cold as ice within him when assailed. It was part of his athletic heritage; it made him a tower when lesser boys faltered. He said, speaking slowly as was his wont: "Coach, I reckon I'm not scared. I should've known that you couldn't take a joke. I don't care about fighting. I'm a peaceable kid. I never boxed in my life."

Fort said: "It will be a pleasure to teach you." He nodded to himself, pulling his topcoat tighter. He never wore a hat or heavy coat, even on the coldest days. He was physical culture personified, a non-smoker, non-drinker, a spirited example to his charges, people said. He strode into the wind, grudgingly bending a bit to its force, as though he condescended only to the elements.

Babe went thoughtfully to his room. He tossed a book on the table, stared at Legs Carter, his roommate and fellow-townsmen from Midburgh. Legs, a slim boy still nursing a football knee, said:

"I hear you're a boxer now."

College boxing can be a right rough and exciting sport, with some very special angles—as witness this fine story.

by JOEL
REEVE

"Fort must have put it on the bulletin board," nodded Babe. "He posted a list. I didn't even look at it."

"The new basketball coach is smart," said Legs. "Fort's got to do something. He's got Tipper Gregg, Fats Adelberg and Swede Sorgerson out for the heavyweight division. Claims he'll have a champ. Claims one of you-all will beat Ad Porter, the Navy guy."

"Those boys are tough," chuckled Babe. "Swede and Fats battled it out for center on the team. There's a little grudge there. But Tipper—he's my weight, one-seventy-five. He's too light."

Legs said: "You'll look good in there."

"I'm skiing on the back hill," said Babe stoutly. "I like this skiing."

"She-ing," Carter said critically. "They call it she-ing. . . . Is Alice going to try it too?"

"You're so smart!" said Babe. "You're the clever kid." There was a knock on the door, a diffident tapping. Babe said: "You must be a stranger, but come in anyway, dopy."

The door opened, and a round, bald head came around its edge. Legs jumped, putting down his book. Bixby Mordant, millionaire, sponsor and backer of Midstate College, came in. He was a rotund man with a bald head and face, but with eyes sharper than razor edges. He said: "Hi, boys. Hadda stop by. Hadda see Babe."

Babe said: "Howdy, Mr. Mordant. Take a chair. Have something—only we haven't got anything. We don't smoke; we don't drink."

Mordant said: "You're great, Babe. Got to talk to you. About Fort."

Legs said: "Should I take a walk, maybe? When you talk about Fort—"

He made a face. "I know," Mordant nodded gloomily. "Tough man. But good. Builds well. Good football man. Good baseball, put baseball on college map."

The boys were silent. It was true. Fort was the best young coach in the country. Midstate College was the Center College of the day and Fort had worked night and day to that end.

Mordant went on: "Personalities aside—think you ought to box. Minor sport, Babe. But you're news. Papers'll watch you. Ought to be good, good reflexes and all."

Babe said: "I'm no scrapper, Mr. Mordant. I'm not the type."

Mordant spread his hands. "Matter of reflexes. You'll do. This Por-

Babe

ter— Navy tradition, good boxers. And Slavin. You remember Slavin? King University baseball? Big, rough, nasty?"

Babe said: "We beat them at baseball and football. Must we knock their blocks off too?"

Mordant said gently: "Wouldn't coerce you, Babe. Like you too much. Appreciate what you did—football, baseball. But Midstate Stadium cost more'n a million. Want to make football pay off next year. Need some color—basketball no good."

Legs looked at Babe. The tall, lean athlete looked back at Legs. Babe said: "You're such a nice guy, Mr. Mordant."

The stout man flushed amazingly, a deep pink. He said: "Don't do it if you don't want, Babe. Fort'll probably beat you a lot. Tough man . . . And thanks. Thanks—a lot." He got up and ducked out the door.

Legs said: "He really is nice. He pays us fifty per month and asks darn' little."

"Let's eat," said Babe gloomily. "I'm taking Alice to the show. I guess you're right. It'll be she-ing this winter—and I'll wind up punch-drunk."

STRIPPED. Fort was formidable. He had rolling muscles, not lean, but supple and quick. He weighed over two hundred. Babe felt young, puny and ineffective with the big gloves strapped to his hands. Tippy Gregg had quit that day, with his eye cut where Sorgerson had clipped him. Fats Adelberg, a freakish athlete with a pillow-like middle, was slamming Sory the Swede all over the ring they had pitched in the old gym to keep out of the way of the basketball team in Mordant Memorial, the new edifice dedicated to brawn at Midstate.

Fort said: "Time! Adelberg, you'll never be a boxer. You lead with your right half the time." But Fort was pleased. He was shrewd enough to see that Fats would upset many a better boxer. The two climbed down, sweating happily. They were hearty athletes, rough and tough.

The lighter boys seemed to enjoy it too. Bitsy Magin, an inveterate hanger-on around the teams he was too small to make, weighed one-fifteen and could whip the lightweight. He was lightning-fast, and had boxed before. He said *sotto voce* to Babe: "Here's what Fort's been waitin' for. Good-by, pal. He's mighty old tough in there."



Babe felt young and puny with the big gloves strapped to his hands.

Fort was beckoning Babe with an imperious gloved hand. The pillows weighed twelve ounces and felt like a ton. Babe climbed into the squared circle. Sory came in to spread the ropes and second him. Babe did not know what to do. Bitsy was holding a stop-watch. Fats was in Fort's corner. Boys were drifting in from all parts of the gym, pretending casualness, their eyes bright with interest. The campus knew every facet of the Fort-Young rivalry for the attentions of Alice Hale, knew that Fort disliked Babe heartily.

Fort said crisply: "You hold your left hand out, Young. You move, keeping balance, spreading your legs, weight on the right foot primarily, but shifting as you punch. Like this." He moved, sparring. He was practised, almost graceful. He said: "This first time we shall just try you for all-around potentialities; then we'll know which style you should adopt."

Babe said: "There are styles? You don't just try to kill someone?"

"Boxing is a sport. You never try to kill anyone in amateur sport," snapped Fort. "In college boxing there is no clinching, no in-fighting, no dirty tricks. This is the 'sweet science,' the sport; in the past, of kings."

Babe said happily: "That's fine. Sounds easier'n football."

Magin tapped a hammer on a bell. Fort danced out, left hand extended. Babe looked befuddled, stared at Magin, at Sory. Then he went out hesitantly, his left hand awkwardly stiff, his right clenched and half bent. He felt strange, ill at ease.

FORT came closer. His left hand shot a quick jab to Babe's nose. His right darted inside and clipped Babe in the middle, doubling him over as though he had been hit with a battering-ram. Babe went backward, half-falling under the savage attack.

The gym door opened. A naked head came in, peering. Bixby Mordant slipped inside the door and stood there, unnoticed.

Down inside Babe, the cold anger stirred. Essentially the best-natured of young men, his anger was slow to rise, but there were dozens watching, and he knew he was being shoved around. It was unfair, and Fort was taking advantage.

A small voice said that Fort was somewhat to be excused. Babe floundered, trying to get his feet under him. Always fair, he nodded assent to the small voice. He got his head up and shook off the blur.

Fort was saying impatiently: "Come, come, Young, you must have some ability. Try to hit me."

Babe said nothing. His gray eyes were clear, emotionless, his face calm. His fair hair ruffled in a draft. Sory leaned forward, one hand on the apron of the ring, his face intent.

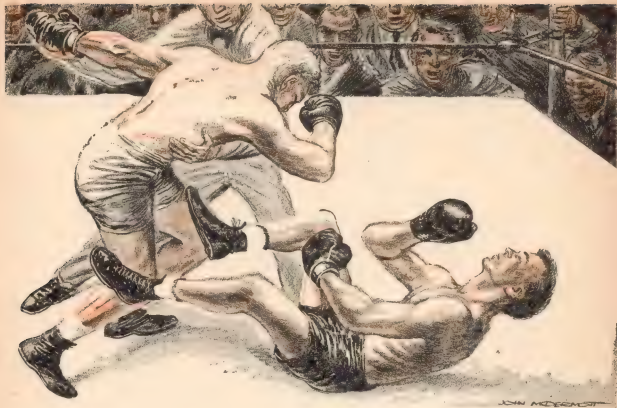
Babe went ahead. Fort sidestepped, cuffed him. Babe slipped, turned. He came back. He did not throw wild punches. He just moved on the legs which had carried him through so many contests on other fields of sport. The cartilage in his left knee creaked, but he kept moving. Fort hit him with a hundred blows. Bitsy rang the bell again. Babe let go with a swing, his first. It clipped Fort's head. The Coach stepped back, glaring in outraged ire.

"That was a palpable foul! The bell sounded—you heard it; you struck me! Such conduct is inexcusable in boxing," he said furiously.

Babe said: "Oh—the bell! I'm sorry, Coach. Forgot about bells. I never tried this. Nice game, though. I like it." His gray eyes held the Coach. He went to the corner and Sory had a stool, but he did not like to sit down when he was working. He said to Sory: "Brother, he can sock, huh?"



Babe said: "We beat them at baseball and football. Must we knock their blocks off too?"



He tried to land another blow, but hit only air. . . . The referee was shoving him.

"He never hit me that hard," said Sory under his breath. "The jerk!"

Babe said: "I can take it, huh?"

Bitsy hammered the gong. Babe turned and went out for more. He got it. Fort slapped him dizzy in less than a minute. Babe just kept wading in, trying to get close. Fort left-handed him off, crossed the right. Fort was very good; even Babe realized that. Ad Porter, Bull Slavin, were lucky they did not have to face the Midstate coach.

Near the end of the round Fort had Babe on the ropes in a corner, and everyone crowded, frankly absorbed now, to see the star athlete getting his lumps. Fort abandoned pretense of boxing, set himself, waded in. His hard face was glistening with sweat and some deep emotion. He was working off the accumulated dislike of two years, banging away at the lean Babe.

Out of nowhere Babe threw one. It was off his chest, where he had finally located a place to keep his right glove when he was not using it. It lanced out, crossing over one of Fort's hard blows.

The big glove squashed against Fort's jaw. The Coach flew back out of the corner. He went halfway across the ring, his eyes wide with amazement. His feet got tangled, and he

sat down on the lower strand of the ropes.

In a second he was up. Babe, watching, said in his cool voice: "Hit you too hard, Coach? Maybe I ought to ease up."

There was a second's hushed silence in the gym. Babe's ribs were red from the hammering he had taken; there was a trickle of blood from his nose. The Coach was quite unmarked, of course.

A thunder of laughter exploded. It rocked the corners of the old gym as the spectators howled at Babe's cool insolence. In the midst of it Fort came off the ropes like a wild man. He leveled a straight left in there, slapping it against Babe's chin. He threw a right from the hip. It landed square on Babe's chin.

BABE woke up with Sorigerson laddling water on him. He said: "Brother, he sure can sock."

He got up, shoving Sory aside. He said calmly: "Where is he? Let's get on with this thing."

"You were kayoed. Anyone coulda counted a hundred. You only get a ten count in this racket," said Sory. His face was stiff with anger. "The jerk ran out. Said the session was over. He was ashamed, that's what. If Mordant ever saw that—"

Babe said: "Why, it's all right, Sory. I like this boxing."

"Like hell you do. You don't know nothin'," said Sory gloomily. "He'll just beat you up every afternoon. Me an' Adelberg will fight on the team; you'll be an alternate. Fort'll say you gotta learn, and he'll beat you to death."

Babe said: "Well, I'll have to learn. We can work out, can't we?"

Sory said: "Babe, you're a great footballer and baseballer. But you are definitely not a boxing type."

"I dropped him once," said Babe.

"The last time," predicted Sory. "It was a sucker punch. He's good."

Babe said: "I'm out for the team. You think I'd quit?"

"No," said Sory sadly. "I only wish you would. Fort's got you at last. He fixed you this time. You'll wind up talking to yourself."

In the shower, Babe considered his aches and pains. He remembered the King game in November, and wondered if it had been any worse. He decided that there was little difference. It felt now as though he had something in his eye and there was a cut inside his mouth where his cheek had been jammed against his teeth.

He was soberly toweling himself when Bitsy Magin came in. Bitsy was

about five feet four and had a face like a pixie. He examined Babe with critical, slanted green eyes. He said: "Fort really gave it to you." He looked around and said sharply: "I can help you, Babe."

"Huh? You?" Babe's voice was incredulous, but he recovered quickly, and said more kindly: "Why, thanks, Bitsy, you're a great kid."

"Nuts," said Bitsy. "I hate a bully. People been tryin' to bully me all my life. That's why I learned to box. I'm good, pal, believe me. You'll see how good. I took lessons from Canzoneri. My pop's loaded, and he let me fool around the New York gyms. Nobody bullies me now. I can help you learn fundamentals, I tell you."

Babe said: "Well, I'll be damned! When do we start?"

"Early. Before classes," whispered Bitsy. He had, it seemed a flair for dramatic secrecy. "In my rooms. I got big rooms; I got eight-ounce gloves. We'll work every day."

"Sounds horrible," shuddered Babe. "My first class is eight."

"You'll have to do road work," said Magin. "Run a lot."

"No road work," said Babe severely. "My legs are okay. It's my hands. They are all thumbs."

Magin said: "We'll fix that in a couple months."

"Months?" Babe was aghast. "It'll be baseball in the cage in a couple months. This I got to learn quick."

"It takes years to make a real boxer," said Magin sententiously.

"I haven't got years," said Babe. "We'll have to speed up. Thanks, anyway, pal. I'll see you in the morning." He went soberly to dinner.

ALICE HALE said firmly: "You must quit—at once. Why, your eye is almost closed!"

Babe touched the tender optic. He said: "Your lover hits like a mule."

"It's your own fault. You know you hate it. You're not the sort of boy who fights," she said. She was very gentle, with a surprising interest in sports which called for team-play, but with aversion to the rough spots even in football. "You'll be hurt—your face will be like those awful plug-uglies in the papers."

Babe said: "Yeah. . . . You're right I don't like it much. But I'm in it. Fort beat me to pieces. How can I quit?"

She said: "You must have moral courage. What difference does it make if John can whip you with gloves? He is bigger than you, anyway. It would be surprising if you could whip a big, strong man like John. He is in his prime, after all."

"Prime? He told you that?" Babe grinned thinly, watching her. They were in the downstairs sitting-room of the building which housed Prexy

Hale's office and his living-apartment. An open fire crackled on the hearth and the room should have been warm but a chill crept in.

She said with dignity: "You know I see him. After all, I am Father's secretary and John has much business in this office."

"You were at the show with him the other night," said Babe.

"You had a fraternity meeting," she said. Her face grew pinker than the fire should have caused it to be.

Babe said: "I can't tell you what to do. Only what I want you to do. Fort's crazy about you—always has been. But I thought you—I thought we had come to a place where we understood each other." He had a hollow feeling inside him; he felt he was going up the wrong path, but he could not stop. "The big slob beat tar out of me because he is crazy about you and he thought I had the inside track. Did I take the wallop for nothing?"

SHE said nervously: "Babe, you shouldn't be out for that boxing team. I don't like it, and it's bad for you. I like you to be easy-going and good-natured and already you are trying to quarrel with me. It's a rowdy sport and it's dangerous."

"John Fort loves it," said Babe. "He says it is 'the sweet science.' Makes it sound like a daisy chain. You approve of John Fort."

President Hale said in the doorway: "Ahem. I hear you are out for boxing, Babe. Good sport. I used to box, in school, did you know?" He was not too old to box a little now, Babe thought, a handsome, graying man, a fine school man, a hard worker, with vision.

Babe said maliciously: "Tell us about it, sir. Sounds swell."

Prexy Hale backed to the fire, stretching his legs, beaming at the young people. "I was on the team two years. Lost only one bout. We were going against the Navy—always tough, the Navy—and they had a big lad named Buntwistle or Boatwistle or something of the sort—"

He told the story well. Babe listened raptly, one eye, his good one, upon Alice. The girl sat twisting her hands together and now her face was scarlet. She was very polite, she waited until her father had finished, a not inconsiderable space of time. Then she arose and faced both men.

She said: "I'm sure you want to talk boxing together. I have some work, so please excuse me." She whisked herself out of the room, her long legs twinkling prettily in the soft light.

Hale said: "Oh, yes, and there was the time I boxed Gant, the Yale star, and got a draw."

Babe didn't hear that one. He was thinking only about the girl upstairs.

He knew he had kicked it around, talking about Fort the way he had. He was very new at this game of being in love, but he was learning fast. He kept his face toward Hale, but his heart was not in the room. He was, for that time, an unhappy young man. He got away, finally, and went home too late, for there were books to crack. He labored, being proud of his B grades, an average he managed to maintain throughout all the year, but only by the hardest kind of application.

IN the morning he was turning over for his last nap before the eight o'clock class when the door fell down. At least it seemed to fall down, and a miniature devil in shorts and a T-shirt and a fur overcoat was hauling at Babe, bellowing in his ear. It was Bitsy Magin.

Babe complained, he threatened. But Magin, a youth with a mission, was undeterred. In ten minutes they were in Magin's room.

They were a comical contrast, the alert little fellow with the quick, clever legs and hands and the tall, sleepy Babe, all elbows and knees. They faced each other and the lighter gloves felt better to Babe.

Bitsy Magin said: "Like this, see? Rhythm. Follow me." There was to be no sparring, it seemed. Just a wearisome business of holding out the left hand until Babe's arm seemed about to fall off, of jabbing, jabbing, jabbing. But there did seem to be a rhythm about it and Babe got interested.

Magin said: "Just the left. Nothin' else, pal. Use it this afternoon. Just the left. Keep it up, keep movin' around."

Babe said: "My right hand's no good, huh?"

"Anybody who is right-handed can sock with his right," said Magin contemptuously. "You keep that left out and keep movin' around."

Babe said: "I think you got something there, pal."

"So does Canzoneri," sniffed Magin. "You'll never be real good, Babe. You haven't got that killer instinct. But you can beat Sogry and Fats. Sogry's a sucker for body blows. Fats is just a busybody in there."

Babe said: "Now wait. You think I can make this team?"

"In a month or so," said Magin carelessly, "with me as your teacher."

Babe went thoughtfully to breakfast and his classes. That afternoon he was early at the old gym. He found a light striking-bag and approached it with his left hand. The bag bounced annoyingly into his face, but he kept at it, staying close, shortening the punch, trying to work out a stroke which would accommodate the inflated bag's gyrations.

He got pretty sweaty before the others came in. Sory stared at him, shrugged, went to dress. Fats swagged a little, laughing as he went by. Bitsy Magin slid up and whispered: "Say, you're doin' okay."

"Run along before teacher catches you," said Babe. "I'm busy." He had discovered the heavy bag. He went over to it and began hitting harder blows. It felt pretty good, but his knuckles hurt and he remembered something about bandages to protect the hands and desisted.

FORT arrived on the second of the announced time. It was one of his less annoying characteristics that he was always on time, and never failed to look ostentatiously at his strap watch to prove it. He espied Babe, who was walking around to cool off slowly and said, "Well, Young, I thought you would be absent today."

"You knew better," said Babe coolly. "When do we start?"

Fort said: "We do not start. I merely wished to observe you in action. I do not wish to take advantage of you, Young. You will work out with Sorgerson and Adelberg. Also with lighter men, for boxing. Next week we have eliminations, and on Friday we meet Spanger College in our first contest. Adelberg will represent the heavyweight class for us, I imagine." He rubbed his hands, smiling frostily, making sure Sory heard that crack. He was a smart coach, all right, Babe thought.

Babe boxed with the others. They had a propensity for brushing aside his left jab and knocking him on the nose, but he was catching on, he thought. Sory hit him too hard. Adelberg was like a man with a fly-swatter, but could not hurt a fly, Babe thought privately. It was a busy time, but somehow he was beginning to get into it. Maybe he did not like it very much, but he caught some of the flavor of it.

Boxing, he decided, is a primeval sport. He looked it up in the proper source and found that the first famed fighter was one Theagenes of Greece, 450 B.C., who won 1,406 bouts with an iron-shodded glove, killing most of his opponents. That sounded reasonable, Babe thought, touching tenderly the sore places on his face. There must be something to it, for the game had certainly lasted. . . .

He was not seeing much of Alice, though. The big winter dance was coming up and he had not formally asked her. They had been so close that it had not been necessary, but now she was so cool and impersonal when they were together for an occasional date that he was frightened.

The night before the boxing elimination he said: "Uh—how about the dance, baby?"

She slid a glance at the dark spot under his right eye. She said, "Will you be presentable? Doesn't the team have a boxing date the previous night? With Navy?"

He said: "Shucks, I haven't made the team yet."

"You will," she said. "Oh, I have confidence that you will. You always win, don't you, Babe?"

"Why—no. I can't beat Fort," Babe said.

"That's just personal enmity," she answered stiffly. "Of course you can't beat him. But you'll beat those other boys."

Babe said: "Fort's a great, big man, huh? I can only beat boys."

She said: "Really, Babe Young, I don't know whether I care to go to a dance with you or whether you are too combative to be good company." Her head was high and so was her color.

He said savagely: "Well make up your mind and let me know." He strode away and it was not until he got to his room and turned Legs Carter over to stop his snoring that he wondered if boxing was really making him short-tempered and aggressive. He had never spoken like that before to Alice.

He decided to apologize next day, but he got up so early for a session with Bitsy that he forgot all about it. The bouts were scheduled early and Bitsy was doubtful. He said, "I dunno, Babe. You stick the left hand out, and you move around, but you got no fire."

"I should have fire, shadow boxing," Babe was puzzled.

"It's somethin' hard to explain," said Bitsy. "Boxing is the fundamental clash between two men alone. The one who is most determined to win can usually make it, if he has fire."

"I thought it was the 'sweet science,'" Babe complained.

"You'll find out," said Bitsy Magin darkly.

They went into the gymnasium together. The members of the squad were all a little nervous. They spoke tightly, and those in the various weight groups were curt with others in their class. It was very different from the team sports, where opposing tackles worked out defenses together and everyone was like a big, more or less happy family, Babe noted.

The lighter boys competed first. Bitsy announced firmly that he would fight as a bantam, a feather and a lightweight. There was some argument, but Bitsy said coolly, "I can go three bouts, three two-minute rounds at top speed, and I'll prove it. What's wrong with that?"

Fort, always an opportunist, smelled a story which the papers would love. He agreed to the idea. In a very

short time Bitsy Magin had knocked three opponents in as many weeks kicking to the floor. The little guy bit scientifically and none could stand against him.

Cal Mulloy won the welter division job. Jay Jackson, third baseman on the ball team on which Mulloy played second, got the middle position. Fort paused for dramatic effect and then said, "Light heavyweights, please!"

Bitsy gave Babe a shove. He snapped: "Get in there. You weigh 'seventy-four. Go ahead."

Babe went up, bewildered. Fort scowled and said: "You're a heavy." "He weighs 'seventy-four," Magin piped.

Fort said: "Well—" He would have a four-man team if Babe won, and then won the heavy division berth. Fort was no fool, neither did he underestimate Babe Young. He had noted with incredulity the improvement of his unfavorable athlete. He said: "Ahem— All right, men, let's go!"

Sam Levy and a healed Tippy Gregg were the light-heavies. Babe met the winner of the bout, who was Tippy. The lanky end, a good friend, was a fair boxer, but in the first round Babe found Tippy couldn't hit. Bitsy, in his corner, said: "Go close and punch."

It was excellent advice. Tippy took a hard right and elevated his eyebrows to his hair, and began running away. Babe won the light-heavy spot with ease.

AGAIN they drew lots. Babe found himself opposed to Adelberg, the winner to meet Sorgerson. There was a crowd gathered by now. Again the gym door slid open and the stout but silent and shadow-like figure of Bixby Mordant watched from afar.

Magin said: "Now it counts. Fats can't hit. Same tactics, pal."

Babe nodded. It was serious business now. It had been a stunt and a joke, but now it was serious. He was in it, somehow his honor was involved. He looked at Fort, who was refereeing. He listened eagerly for the bell.

He was up like a flash and out to ring center. Fats, amazingly swift, ran around him, slapping those quick blows which were like the paws of a cat stroking a piece of paper on a string. Babe waded right in among the buzzing heavy gloves. He laid a right hand down the center, aiming for Fats' jaw.

The punch went home. . . . Fats turned sidewise, threw out his arms as though in protest. He sank, like a punctured large balloon, to the floor. Fort, his face flinty, counted out his freak boxer.

Sory was right behind Fats. Babe had no time for rest. Sory scowled,

staring across, flexing his big arms. Magin whispered: "Box him. Make him miss. Then nail him in the body. Not that jaw, it's granite. The body, pal."

Sorgy was slower than Fats. Babe could walk around him. He did so. In the third round he hit Sorgy a full-armed right in the belly. Sorgy sat down on the canvas floor and looked very unhappy. The bell saved him.

Fort waited a full moment. Then he said: "The heavyweight division will be represented by—" The crowd watched, open-mouthed. "Sorgerson!" He climbed down from the ring amidst a deep silence. He walked to the dressing-room which he used, apart from the team. He was a man accustomed to walking alone, in dispute with the mob.

Sorgy said: "Hey! Is he nuts? You beat my can of oil."

Babe said: "That's all right. You fight the dreadnaughts I'll take on the light-heavies. Magin was plenty smart, see?"

Bitsy boasted: "You're damn right. I saw a chance to outfox that big jerk. I knew if Babe didn't knock you out he'd sucker Babe for an alternate and only use him when he had a big spot, like against Porter or Slavin. But Tippy couldn't beat him, so I weighed Babe—"

Sorgy said morosely: "And now I got to fight Porter and Slavin. I love this. It is a sweet science."

ALICE had not called and Babe was too stubborn to make the first advance. The boxing team met King, then Navy the night before the dance. Babe had never been so unhappy, but he kept very busy with Bitsy Magin and with Fats and Sorgy. He was not a finished performer the night of the King meeting, but he met one of the Ober twins and knocked him kicking with a lucky right in the second. Mulloy and Jackson eked out decisions.

Bitsy beat his men hands down, jiggling around, taking decisions because no college boxer could hit a boy who had trained with Canzoneri. Then it was Sorgy against Bull Slavin for a clean slate.

Sorgy got in there very eager. Bitsy and Babe worked his corner and Bitsy kept telling him: "You got to fight this guy. He's tough."

"I'll moralize him," Sorgy said.

Bitsy looked sadly at Babe. Slavin, a rawboned, ugly man, was the star baseball pitcher, already signed by a big-league team. King University, the rich school of Midstate, the big-time athletic school, would want this one bout at least. The heavyweight division being the most important, a win for Bull would make up for the other losses.

Sorgy went out like a whirlwind. Slavin sidestepped the rush, put out a left which stopped Sorgy dead as he came around, too slow. Slavin threw a right to the belt line, almost a low blow.

Sorgy fell down. He did not get up.

King supporters rang the welkin. Bitsy and Babe picked up the fallen Midstate gladiator and Bitsy said: "It wouldn't be so bad, only Ad Porter kayoed Slavin in one minute, twenty seconds last week."

Babe said: "I hope the footballers don't start poundin' Sorgy's middle next year."

That was the King meeting. On Monday John Fort faced his boxing squad. He had the Sunday papers and four columnists had taken occasion to write about Bitsy Magin, the triple-threat and Babe Young, the football star now winning light-heavy contests. It was huge publicity for the boxing team and one large paper had even predicted that Navy was in for trouble.

Fort said: "Of course Navy has a great team—Navy always does. But I have hopes. The next few days will tell." His hard eye roved past Sorgy, who squirmed. It fell on Babe. John Fort said coldly, "Perhaps we can persuade Young to box also as a heavy-weight."

Babe started. He protested, "Hey, wait a minute. Did I ever say I wouldn't box as a heavy?"

"You entered the light-heavy class," said Fort. "It was assumed—"

Babe said flatly: "I'll box light-heavy and heavy too."

"You think you are capable?" Fort asked innocently.

Babe said: "I dunno. But I'll do it." He felt he had made another mistake. He felt that Fort was sliding him into a spot. But he really did not care. Bitsy was tugging at him, but he pulled away.

Fort said: "Well, we shall see." He proceeded to put them through a stiff session, then commanded that they get up every morning and run. They groaned, but Fort told them it was essential.

Going to their rooms, Bitsy said: "You sucker! You can't beat one side of Ad Porter."

"Can Sorgy?" Babe asked grimly.

"No—but Sorgy goes out after one body punch. You'll stay in there and get killed. A guy died last year after fighting Porter, you know."

"The sweet science," murmured Babe.

"Their light-heavy is rough," said Bitsy. "I am going to have trouble with their lightweight. Mulloy and Jackson will get murdered. I'll whip their bantam and do no worse than a draw with their feather. That will leave the whole works on you. Fort has suckered you after all, pal."

"Okay. I'm suckered." Babe was short with his friend. He bade him good night and turned to walk the wind-swept campus. His course took him inevitably past the President's house. He knew he should be eating his dinner, but he wasn't hungry.

He could not catch a glimpse of Alice through the heavily curtained windows. He walked back and ate without appetite. It would be a hard week, and he still had no date for the dance. He wondered if Fort had asked Alice. He thought he knew the answer to that. He wondered if Alice had consented. It was all very miserable.

HE got through the week, however. He boxed Sorgy and beat him to pieces. He learned a few tricks from the light-hitting Fats. And Bitsy had worked himself to an edge so fine that Babe was worried.

The Navy team came up and Ad Porter was a lean giant with a rugged countenance and no nonsense about him. The rest were just crew-hair-cut boys, except the lightweight, who looked capable. They worked out in the afternoon and Bitsy's estimate seemed right.

The papers had played it up, and the crowd in the Mordant Memorial was tremendous. To Babe's amazement the meeting took on all the fanfare of any big athletic event. Boxing was booming around the country and the college brand seemed, with the added color of Bitsy and Babe, to have caught on for fair.

Bitsy fought his bantam and won, but had to go three rounds. Babe, in the corner, sensed that Bitsy was weary, that he had tried too hard and had gone a little stale. Against the feather, a clever boy, Bitsy fought too defensively, did not time himself right and got a draw.

Babe said: "Hey, even if I win mine—you got to get this guy or the best we do is a draw."

Bitsy moaned: "You can't beat Porter. I got to get him for us to be even. If you beat their light-heavy."

They were resting, watching Mulloy take a shellacking from the welter. Mulloy got through, a loser. Jay Jackson tried hard, but the Navy middle had too many guns. Jackson lost.

The crowd was noisy. They wanted the little guy back, they wanted to see Ad Porter against Babe. Bitsy climbed into the ring, his pixie face taut and weary, not from the night's efforts, but from preparation during the week. Babe lifted him at the bell and shoved him out.

Bitsy moved toward the light-weight—a boy fully a head taller. He ducked into a hard right hand, staggered. The lightweight came in. Bitsy leaned down to the floor, picked

his right hand from somewhere in Dixie, and threw it.

The Navy boy scarcely knew what hit him. They counted him out and carried him away and his voice could be heard saying, "That lil' joker can't hit!"

"No, but he hit you," said Ad Porter. The big Navy man was serious-faced. It wasn't often a Navy boxing team was held even by a small college like Midstate.

Babe was on next. He got in there, wearing white trunks, a bit self-conscious. He saw Alice, several rows back, with her father, who wanted to sit at ringside but had to stay near his daughter. Alice's face was very white. She had not been there earlier and Babe wondered what that meant. Had she come to see him win? Or did she hope he would be beaten?

He faced the tall Navy light-heavy. Bitsy, running from the showers, was just in time for a last word. He said, "I lucked out, pal. See if you can get this guy fast and save your strength."

Babe went out at the bell behind a fast left. He had learned to sink a pretty good jab. He put it in the Navy boy's face and got him off balance. But the sailor was smart and tinned. Babe had to keep after him with the left and never did get a chance to use his right. The round ended.

Bitsy scolded: "You'll be tired for Porter. Get him."

Babe said: "He's too fast. He runs away."

"He's too smart," mourned Bitsy.

Babe started dutifully in pursuit in the second. The Navy boy got into a corner, suddenly stood his ground, fighting. Babe ducked, and crashed his right.

THE Navy sank slowly, trying hard to catch onto something; the boy lay still while the referee counted him out. Babe got down out of the ring and ran back to the dressing-room and stretched out while Bitsy rubbed him.

"Ahem!" Babe turned and stared at Bixby Mordant. The bald man was staring at him. Mordant said: "Er—Babe, you're all right?"

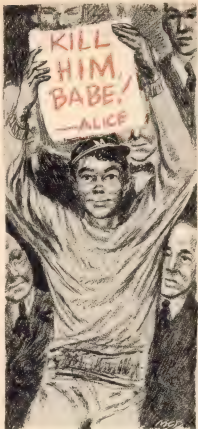
"Sure. Ready for the slaughter," said Babe.

Mordant said: "Er—you don't have to fight him. Talked to Fort. Said you were too light. Fella weighs one-hundred-two. Sorserson, Adelberg could box him. Told Fort; he said it was up to you."

Babe said: "That's right, I offered." Mordant shook his head. "Hale don't like it."

Babe said: "Look, Mr. Mordant, these people came to see me fight—not box—Porter. The papers played it up. We got a mob out there and

Illustrated by John McDermott



He held it up where Babe could see it.

we got publicity all over the country. What's all this, anyway?"

"Don't want you hurt, Babe," said Mordant mildly. "A mistake, sure. Shouldn't have allowed it."

Babe said: "You go tell Fort I never backed down yet. Why, I'll—" He sat up, his face scarlet with anger. "Never mind, Mr. Mordant. You're a swell guy, always. This is my wagon. I'll haul it myself."

He started for the door. Bitsy said: "Omigosh, now he's mad. He'll get killed if he goes in there mad."

Mordant scurried on fat legs. His bald head bobbed down the aisles, finally disappeared. Bitsy followed Babe to ringside. Babe was saying impatiently: "Get that big gob in here. I'll show them fighting."

"Omigosh," Bitsy said. "Please, Babe. Quiet!" They climbed into the corner. Sorsy forced Babe down on the stool. Fort was sitting with Alice and Hale, now.

A bustling young team manager came to the corner. He held a piece of paper. He held it up where Babe could see it.

It was a large sheet and it was stabbed with red marks. They were scrawled red letters, Babe saw. They read: "Kill him, Babe! Alice."

Babe laughed. He looked over at Alice and waved. She waved back, but hesitantly, he thought. Fort's face was stern. Prexy Hale was leaning forward, talking to Mordant.

At long last the bell rang. Bitsy made a praying gesture and Babe went out to meet his doom.

Porter was a very earnest young giant. He had a left hand like a firebrand. He kept it moving, thrusting it, feinting, thrusting. He put it on Babe and kept it there.

It was like being led around with a ring in his nose. Babe tried again and again to shake it off. He slid close once and Porter was so strong Babe gasped in the grasp of the Navy man. They broke at once, college style. Babe backed two steps, set himself.

Porter let go with an inside right which was a beautiful thing to watch. It was not a lovely thing to catch. Babe took it on the jaw and went sideways, then into the ropes, then to the floor. A Navy adherent howled, "Now we can ALL go home!"

It was the second time Babe had been knocked down. John Fort had done it to him; now it was this big Middy. He lay on his side and heard a voice counting.

He sought Bitsy. The little guy was holding out fingers, giving the count, but Babe's eyes were blurred. He knew only that he was supposed to get up. He hauled on the ropes. He got to his knees, shook his head. The referee was peering at him to see if he was hurt. A bell rang somewhere.

Bitsy was through the ropes and at him like a terrier after a St. Bernard. Babe shook him off and walked to his corner. He said thickly, "How'm I doin'?" He managed to grin to show he was not serious.

The minute's rest went on winged seconds. Bitsy waved smelling-salts under his nose, and Babe got up. Bitsy applied the salts to his own nostrils and went back to praying that Babe would not get killed.

Babe went back to the wars. Ad Porter, balked of his knockout, came fast. He came in behind a lunging left, the right poised for the finisher.

Babe was not smart. He did not try to run. Porter thought Babe would retreat, being wobbly from the knockdown and still somewhat bewildered. But Babe was a different kind of athlete. He just stood there and ducked a little, and the left slid over his shoulder.

Porter threw the big right hand, and Bitsy screamed at the top of his lungs, not saying anything, just screaming at what he saw. Babe was in a semicrouch and the left hand was over his shoulder and there came that big right. Such a right hand leaves, inevitably, an opening.

Babe was no slicker. He was far from an experienced boxer. But he was a quick lad and he saw light. He chucked his own right hand as soon as the left landed on his neck, sliding off. He threw it with gusto and vim.

Porter, the greatest of the Navy heavies, went backward, his mouth open, his serious eyes panicky. Babe took one step. Then he threw a left hook, because he was balanced that way after the right landed.

Porter took the left flush on the button. He spun half around. Babe walked around, musing at the strange expression on Porter's face. He muttered, "Well, old boy, nice seein' you—like that!" He hit Porter with another right, experimentally, then with a left again, a very hard left.

He tried to land another blow, but hit only air. The referee was shoving him. He walked away, his left knee aching somewhat, and leaned on the ropes. He heard Bitsy screaming and frowned at him. College boxing was supposed to be refined, gentle. He turned around and there was Porter. He was lying on his face. The referee was saying, "Nine—ten—and out."

"Well," said Babe to no one in particular. "Imagine that. He doesn't want to play any more. He knocks me dizzy—then he quits on me!"

Bitsy's face was like that of a very happy pixie now. He was jumping up and down. Babe went over and said, "Restrain yourself, junior."

They got to the dressing-room somehow through the wildly excited crowd. Bitsy was raving, "Like I said, like I said! Anybody can hit with his right hand. The sucker left an opening and Babe feeds him the right. But the left I taught him won for us!"

John Fort was serene. "A very fortunate punch. Very lucky, Young. Of course you led with your right—"

Babe got up slowly. The sodden gloves were still on his hands. He said in a faraway voice, "I didn't know what I was doin', Coach. I was dazed. You mean I did like *this*?"

HE slammed with his right fist. The blow caught Fort on the very tip end of his aggressive chin. The Coach crashed among the clutter of the dressing-room floor.

The boxing team stared, aghast. Bitsy said: "Omigosh! Now Babe'll be fired for sure."

The bald head of Bixby Mordant peered from behind a locker. The millionaire who guided the financial destinies of Midstate tiptoed forward. He held a pail half full of not too clean water. It was Babe's corner

pail. Mordant said mildly, "Well. Nice work, Babe—I mean on Porter, of course. Just run along, boys. Just shower. Fine publicity out of this show, Babe. Okay, boys. Run along." He poised the bucket over the recumbent Coach.

The boys ran for the shower-room. Mordant dumped the water. He sat on a bench and watched Fort wake up. He said, "Slipped, didn't you? Fell down and hurt yourself."

Fort stared. "That Young! I'll—" "Saw you beat on him. When he came out for the team. Wasn't fair," said Mordant without inflection.

Fort struggled up. His face was flushed, he did not meet the eye of the stout man. He said: "I'm—I'm all wet."

"Exactly," said Mordant. "Should we forget it?"

Fort walked stiffly toward his private dressing-room. Mordant sighed. He got up and wandered into the hall. Alice Hale was moving uncertainly toward the exit. Neither of her young men had appeared.

The fat little man said, "Er—maybe I was wrong."

"I don't like this boxing," she said flatly. Then she added as though not of her own volition, "But Babe won, didn't he?"

"You sent him a note." Mordant reached in his pocket, hauled out a small gold cylinder. He handed it to her. "Your lipstick. You wrote 'Kill him, Babe.' He was excited, and that calmed him, made him laugh."

Her eyes were wide as saucers. "You—you did that?"

"Had to cool him off," said Mordant. "Good boy. He's dressing now. 'Thinks you want to go to the dance with him, I suppose.'"

She said: "Well—John—I half promised—"

"John Fort won't be around for a while," said Mordant. "Indisposed."

"Oh," said Alice. "Well—Babe's so—I do care for him, Mr. Mordant."

THE tall, lean figure came hurrying toward them. Babe's face was a bit flushed, but he wore no sign of battle. Mordant seemed to melt into the far, dim reaches of the gym he had built for Midstate.

Babe said: "Hiya, darlin'? You all set for the dance?"

"Well," said Alice. "Yes—"

He took her by the arm, negligently, started toward the door. "That's a big break for you, darlin'. I'm two new steps ahead—learned 'em boxin'. Great thing, the sweet science! Did I tell you about Theagenes?"

From the door of his office, opened a crack, Fort watched them go. His teeth gnashed together, but that hurt his throbbing jaw. He was very miserable for a man who had just piloted a boxing team to a great victory.

Our Greatest Natural Resource

by HERVEY ALLEN


who wrote "Anthony Adverse," "The City in the Dawn"
and other noted books.

WE Americans are inclined to be criminally wasteful of our natural resources. We exhaust our earth, we deplete our forests, we neglect human life. Man, puny and unsatisfactory though he is, is our mightiest potential. Human relations, human health, human welfare . . . their strength or failure will be the clue to the future of our world. A sound community life, the unit of a sound national life, based on healthy, mutually respectful and co-operative individuals, is the cornerstone of tomorrow.

We have at least one strong tool with which to improve our natural human resource. It is the Community Chests of America, which we support with our voluntary contributions. Twelve thousand "Red Feather" services of these Chests all over the United States and Canada are strengthening human life and human relations every day. Through them, our babies are getting the best

possible start, in health and care. Through them we offer the assistance that helps prevent the breakup of families, the breakdown of individuals. Through these services, we are extending leadership and guidance to more and more boys and girls so that they may not drift into delinquency. Through them we offer a neighborly hand to ourselves at many a crucial moment.

When one man is benefited, we all benefit. That is why everyone of us must give his share, now, today, to the annual Community Chest campaign. Give in your home town, or in your adopted city. Give, because you believe in the potential of the human race, because you believe in conserving our greatest national resource. Atom bombs or no atom bombs, the future of our world depends upon mankind's resiliency and power of growth. But the future depends on the present. Give now.



Gift of the Big Bull

An old-time sailor writes of the deep sea he knows so well.

by **BILL ADAMS**

IT was a fine end for the old beachcomber, but maybe a bit tough on the big bull. Yet he'd had a fine time for many years; besides, he was fighting mad at the finish, and when you're that way, nothing matters. I'll have to begin at the beginning:

Though his kind very seldom attain a greater length than sixty-five feet, the big bull measured a full seventy, and his girth was close to forty. His lower jaw was almost one-third the length of his body. Along each side of it were twenty-two age-yellowed conical teeth, each of which weighed between three and four pounds. In his upper jaw, which was not truly a jaw but part of his skull-bone, instead of teeth there were sockets into each of which, when his mouth was closed, a tooth of the lower fitted as snugly as a banana into its skin. From tip to tip the flukes of his tail measured well over twenty feet. When young he was black, but now he was a pepper-and-salt color. The largest bull in the

pod, he was ruler of the pod. A sheep is one of a flock, a wolf of a pack, a whale of a pod.

His sides, belly, and back were marked by scars gained in battles many fathoms under the sea; some of the scars were so old as to be scarce discernible, others so recent that the skin was not yet healed. Accompanied by his harem of six cows, the largest not over thirty-five feet long, and by five smaller bulls with their harems, and a score or so of whales as yet too young for breeding, he was swimming slowly southward toward the pod's regular breeding-ground—close to the equator, so that the cows might bring forth their young in the warm tropic water. . . .

It was late afternoon, with a golden sun sinking in a silent sky above a windless silent ocean. Suddenly a young cow, virginal, no more than twenty-two feet long, darted past the slowly swimming ruler. A short distance in front of him she stopped, regarded him for a moment from the

small eye a little behind and above the corner of her mouth; then, after the manner of a trout at play in the still water of a mountain pool, she leaped into the air and fell back with a mighty splash.

Answering the young cow's challenge, the ruler of the pod shot forward. As she swerved from his onrush, he leaped high from the water. For the fraction of a second his entire huge bulk, weighing as much as five full-grown elephants, glistened in the sun's golden light. Falling back, he smote the sea such a blow with his flukes that the crash, the upflung spray, were audible and visible for miles in every direction.

While he lay utterly motionless on a blue sea beneath a sky in which clouds of many shapes, floating at various altitudes, continually changed place, shape, and color as the sun declined and air currents drifted them, there was for a few moments no movement whatever in the pod. Then, at the same instant, followed at once by



every cow and every young whale, the five smaller bulls proceeded to sport in the same manner. With some five dozen whales dashing higher and thither, leaping high from the water, smashing its surface with their flukes each time they fell back to it, the shining sunset sea was lashed to boiling foam, while in the midst of his pod the ruler lay motionless as an abandoned derelict.

Presently the largest of the lesser bulls ceased sporting and lay motionless also. Within a few moments every whale of the pod followed suit. The last ripple died. A fourteen-inch flying-fish leaped from the sea—escaping by the tenth of an inch the snapping jaws of a pursuing albacore—flashed over the backs of the pod and dropped to the water beyond, to be instantly seized by a bonito. For a few moments there was no motion on the sea. Then the larger of the lesser bulls, his jaws wide open and his small eyes rage-reddened, rushed at the ruler.

KNOWING instinctively what was coming, the ruler swung his frame about and with flailing flukes dealt the aggressor a terrific blow on the side of the head. Seemingly stunned, the challenger lay still for a few seconds; then, as the big bull made for him with jaws wide open, he surged forward to meet the attack. At the instant ere the combatants met, the ruler, without slowing his onward rush, rolled onto his back. His lower jaw entered the open jaws of his rival, passed through till its point was some feet beyond them, and clamped shut.

Each with the other's lower jaw locked between his own jaws, the infuriated bulls lay quivering in utter rage. Suddenly a spasm shook the ruler. Thrashing his flukes, he swung his enormous bull sideways, throwing its full leverage upon his rival's lower jaw. The smaller bull's jaws opened; the battle was over. The larger bull rolled onto his belly and made savagely for the nearest of the others, which at once turned tail and fled.

His dislocated lower jaw almost at right angles to his head, the defeated bull lay helpless on a mirror-smooth sea, while the victor continued his way southward, followed by the rest of the pod. Behind them sharks gathered about the cripple: snub-nosed bottle-green sharks, blue sharks with evil pointed snouts—big sharks and little, young and old. At the same time there appeared in the hitherto empty air a multitude of hungrily screaming sea fowl.

The lower rim of the sun was almost touching the level horizon when the ruler again ceased swimming. After a few motionless moments his head sank into the sea and his flukes rose at once. Every whale in the pod at once

did as he did. Motionless as monoliths on the far-off land, the flukes of the entire pod hung at an acute angle above the shimmering sunset sea; the sky above was streaked with banners of opal, amethyst, topaz, sapphire, carmine, vermilion, and pearl. Nowhere was there any least sound.

At the exact instant when the last speck of the golden sun vanished every pair of flukes also vanished; their downward motion was almost too swift for eye to follow. A poet might have said the whales had saluted the setting sun. A whaling-man would have said they had *lobtailed*. Had it been possible to question the ruler as to the meaning of the strange act, and to have had a reply, the ruler would have been: "*Time to eat.*" . . .

While the first stars twinkled in a fast-darkening sky, the big bull—now many hundred feet under a sea whereon was no motion whatever—engaged in battle with the ferocious creature upon which he proposed to dine: a giant octopus, a monstrous devilfish, a nightmare horror that from tip to tip of writhing tentacles measured a full fifty-two feet: each tentacle fitted with circular suckers around which were razor-sharp teeth: in the center of the tentacles, and close behind their roots were sinister demonic eyes and a pair of mandibles the shape of a parrot's beak and as sharp.

In black depths to which no ray of light penetrated, every whale of the pod fought for its meal. Great jaws clamped upon and munched desperately struggling tentacles which, ere they were drawn into the cavernous throats, ripped and tore at sides, backs, heads, and bellies.

Almost forty minutes had passed when the first of the pod reappeared on the surface, and blowing from its one nostril to the left of its broad snout the stale air that had enabled it to so long remain below, filled its lungs with fresh. Soon all but the big bull and the virginal young cow lay gently rising and falling as they exhaled and inhaled.

WITH his own meal finished the big bull, far beneath the pod, battled one of two full-grown devilfish which had fastened their tentacles about the young cow and were preventing her from rising. Forty-five minutes had gone when, his huge lungs at the point of exhaustion, he took into his mouth the remains of the head and the razor-sharp mandibles of his antagonist, gulped them down, and rose swiftly to the surface. Completely exhausted, the drowning sea virgin sank to yet greater depths to furnish feasting for the horrid creatures that cold darkness.

At the moment the big bull surfaced a full white moon arose, throwing a path of molten silver across the

still sea. His gray snout lifted from the water and he blew from it a tall jet of commingled acidulous spray and stale air, with a long sighing sound.

To either side, others of the pod were blowing so that the night was filled with the sound of sighing, and silvery fountains rising from the blowholes glimmered in the bright light of the moon.

Soon, having filled his lungs with clean air, he led the pod slowly southward again, till dawn extinguished the stars and the golden sun blazed up. Then, while the bulls lazed on warm tropic water, calves slipped into the quiet sea from the cows' big wombs. At noon one of his own harem lay close beside him, with a twelve-foot calf sucking at one of the two black teats close to the root of her tail. All day the sun blazed, with no cloud in the sky. Toward sunset a long inky cloud rose from the western horizon, engulfed the sun, and crept toward the pod. From it there fell, straight to the windless sea, a hissing torrent of rain—it hissing was like that of a thousand snakes. At the foot of the rain's advancing wall leaped myriad flying-fish—pursuing them, snapping them as they flew, seizing them as they swam, were big fish in such swarms that the sea seemed as a living carpet. That evening there was no need for the big bull to dive to the deeps to feed. He and his pod fed as cattle on the shore feed at a well-filled manger.

DAY after day passed till a month was gone. The calves were growing fast in warm tropic water, the pod sometimes feeding in the deeps, sometimes at the bountiful surface; and never a wind rose to ruffle the lazy doldrums sea. Then came a dawn when, with a gentle breeze ruffling the water and little fleecy white clouds drifting over the opening sky, there appeared on the horizon a tiny white speck. Dashing hither and thither amongst the pod, some calves were sporting, while others sucked their dams' big teats. No whale saw, or, if it saw, paid any heed to the little white speck which might well have been taken for a cloud.

The breeze freshened; the sun rose. The pod sounded—"dived," a landsman would say—and were gone half an hour. Surfacing, they lay gently rising and falling on the white-capped sea, blowing stale air from their lungs, sending up tall jets of spray.

What had been a little white speck was now become a tall white pyramid. From the masthead of the still unnoticed whale-ship a lookout-man called down to the deck: "*Blows! That she blows—an' the biggest bull guer you seen!*"

Five boats, each thirty feet long and manned by six men, dropped from the whale-ship's davits, hoisted their sails,

and in silence save for the wash of the sea at their sides, made for the unsuspecting pod. Soon a harpooner rose erect in the bow of the leading boat, and balancing his weapon judged the distance between himself and the nearest whale. Next instant steel flashed in the sun; then, as the big bull dashed forward, the mate in the boat's stern quickly changed places with the harpooner and one of the crew lowered the sail.

TOWED by the big bull, the mate's boat sped through the sea, with the mate in her bow standing lance in hand, ready to deal the death-blow when the time came. Cheers rose from one after another of the others as each made fast to a whale. Soon five boats were speeding in five different directions. Some of the now leaderless pod had dived. Others swam swiftly away, to go a short distance, turn, and start in another: all of them hopelessly "gallied"—terrified, as a landsman would say.

Suddenly the boat-steerer in the mate's boat—who had thrown the harpoon—yelled warning to his five fellows. He might as well have yelled that apple-blossoms are sweet in spring. For the big bull had turned, and was dashing open-jawed to meet his tormentors.

As the boat veered from its course, the big bull's jaws crushed it like an eggshell, and with it two of its occupants. Passing amidst the wreckage, he destroyed with a blow of his flukes what remained of both boat and crew; then, his small eyes rage-reddened, he passed close by the whale-ship and made toward the horizon astern of her, followed by his favorite cow with her calf.

The sun was gone, the breeze fallen away, when at last he ceased swimming and lay still save for an occasional shudder as he endeavored to rid himself of the steel blade in his side. Close by him lay his cow, sucking her calf.

Presently, its meal finished, the calf let go its dam's black teat and started to gambol between sire and dam. Leaping from the sea; twisting this way and that, it became entangled in the harpoon-line trailing from the bull's side. It took fright, and dashed off in terror, followed at once by the alarmed cow. The line came taut. The harpoon pulled free, leaving a jagged wound whence blood flowed to the sea.

Attracted by the blood, sharks gathered instantly from every direction. The bull, his pain relieved with the steel gone, paid no heed to them but sped after his cow now thrashing the sea to foam with her flukes, some distance away.

Reaching the cow at the very moment a thirty-foot killer whale with

needle-sharp teeth two inches in diameter made another savage dash for the calf's tender belly, the bull dived with jaws wide open. Rising to avoid him, the killer was at once attacked by the enraged cow—but, far swifter than any sperm whale, he easily avoided her onrush: then, maddened by the taste of blood from the harpoon wound, he attacked the bull himself as he surfaced. Next moment, his skull crushed by a blow from twenty-foot flukes, he lay, belly up, to furnish a feast for the sharks.

Till dawn the bull swam slowly on, his cow and calf beside him; his wound was closed now by the two feet of blubber between red flesh and thin skin, so that no blood flowed from it. The pain of the wound was gone; but a different, new pain, now annoyed him—a gnawing ache deep in his great belly, so that when his cow dived to feed upon a school of small migrating cuttlefish he remained on the surface, sullen as any old bull bison on a grassy prairie. Returning, fed, to the surface, the cow gave him a wide berth; she followed well behind, with her calf beneath a protecting fin. Later, feeling the pain less, he dived and fed, to surface again with his belly well filled and his temper better, so that again cow and calf swam beside him. Several days passed, with his temper never the same for long because of the pain that came and went.

ON a bright morning, with his belly filled and no pain troubling, he became aware of other whales nearby, swam swiftly to meet them, and found them to be his own pod. Because of the whale-ship's slaughter they were fewer now. Only two of the four large bulls were left, and three old cows were gone.

Into the midst of the pod he swam, to rule again as for many years he had ruled; he still was slowly swimming when, with no warning, one of the two large bulls drove straight at him, its little eyes rage-red, and struck him full on his wall-like side with its battering blunt snout. And then his pain was back; angered by it and by the upstart's fierce attack, he turned to take vengeance—and as he turned the other bull battered his other side with its great blunt snout.

Again and again the two young bulls drove at him, battered his heaving sides, and thrashed him with their flukes while, tortured by pain within, he vainly tried to meet their savagery. Worn out at last, he turned away and swam from the pod that now was his no more: an outcast at last, a lone old bull with never one cow nor calf to follow him—for an old sick whale with the razor-sharp mandibles of a monster devilfish stuck in his belly to sap his strength slowly is no fit mate nor protector.



Day passed after day, and week after week, the white moons waxed and waned, and the winds rose and fell, and the big old bull swam on and on. Always alone, and always in pain, he swam; and when he dived he sought only the little devilfish because his fighting days were done and his courage lost.

AT last there came a dreary morning of fog, when, on a leaden sea under a leaden sky, followed by sharks, and with sea birds screaming above, he swam in shallow water close by the shore of a continent. He swam very slowly now, for in many days he had not dived to feed, and his strength was gone. A great wind rose that day, and a high wild sea. Weary, he drifted with the tide, letting it carry him whither it would.



Illustrated by John Costigan, N.A.

With the coming of dusk, the fog arose and the drifting bull was aware of a headland close ahead. About to turn, to swim toward the wide safe sea, his tired little eyes saw between himself and the land an old enemy: a thing that neither flew as the sea birds flew, nor swam as the fishes swam.

The pain in his belly forgotten in sudden rage, he swam to meet the foe, and the sharks swam after him, and the sea birds flew above; till his strength gave out as they had known it would, and again he lay lifting and dipping with the lift and the dip of the sea.

And the mate on a clipper's poop deck said to her master, "Something away on the starboard beam, sir. Looks like it might be a derelict."

And the clipper's master replied, his telescope to his eye: "It's a big whale,

Mister. He must be dead, or mighty near it, by the way the birds are hovering over him."

A mile from the shore he lay, and at midnight died; his belly already slashed by ravening sharks, his scarred back scored by bills of screaming birds. Dying, he passed from his bowels an amber-colored waxlike mass that floated light on the heaving tide; and two days later, when devilish were crawling in and out of his skeleton ribs, the mass was washed to the beach between high and low tide.

A gray-headed old beachcomber who for many a year had made a scant living by picking up what the sea tides brought him, stumbled upon the lump of ambergris half hidden by kelp on

the sand. He thrust it into an old gunny-sack and hurried excitedly off to a nearby town. Where, when he was told its worth—a sum he never had dreamed of—he fell to the floor, dead as a stone from the shock of such blissful tidings. A fine end for any old fellow; passing out at the height of happiness!

Later the big bull's ambergris—or excrement, as you might say—came to the hands of a little old perfume-maker who wore a brown velvet jacket, a black skull-cap, and satin carpet slippers. "Beautiful, ah, so beautiful!" he murmured, sniffing it—and used it as the base for a new perfume which he sold at a terrific price to the society ladies of the upper crust.

Secret Agents in

by RICHARD M. KELLY

IT was early March, 1945. The Allied Armies were poised at the Rhine. In the battered city of Munich, approximately two hundred miles deep inside Germany, two OSS agents stood before an SS garage. All around them were uniformed members of Hitler's most fanatical troops, swaggering arrogantly past the ragged-looking "foreign workers."

Just five days before, these two agents had parachuted into the deep snows south of Munich, assigned to a mission that was an intelligence-agent's nightmare. For more than a decade Germany had been tight in the grip of the Gestapo, the SS, the secret police, the SD or counter-intelligence, the military police, the army and the Nazi party. What these men had volunteered to accomplish was the penetration of the Gestapo and these other Nazi security organizations.

They had dropped in armed with reputedly safe anti-Nazi contacts; and one by one each of these contacts had failed them. There was a single name left on the list—a young Belgian who worked in this SS garage. Should they chance it? That was the question they debated in whispers as they stood there on the Munich street. They had their false papers and cover story; would they stand up in this last chance? Should they fail, torture and death would follow.

If they had known that the entire resources of the Gestapo were even then on their trail, they might not have taken their next step—to approach an SS soldier and ask with disciplined casualness: "Where are the Belgian workers?"

That question was to be the beginning of one of the greatest stories in the secret files of the Office of Strategic Services—how these two daring spies, who must even now be known only as "Jan" and "Francis," tricked the German secret police, deceived the dreaded SS into employing them; set up a secret radio under the eyes of the Germans; outfoxed the Gestapo hunters; and penetrated Himmler's underground organization to play a leading part in the smashing of the Bavarian underground. . . .

This mission to operate in Germany—as tough an Allied intelli-

The remarkable story of two greatly daring men who parachuted into Germany—got jobs in a Gestapo garage!—and at almost hazard, radioed information to the advancing Americans.

gence assignment as there was in the European theater—had its inception in the late fall of 1944, when General Eisenhower's armies were checked by fierce resistance on the borders of the Nazi homeland. The two agents, "Jan" and "Francis," had already proven their ability with the Belgian underground.

As told in last month's BLUE BOOK, "Jan" was a twenty-year-old Belgian officer who was made prisoner and escaped from the Nazis in 1940. After fleeing across France, he was imprisoned for fifteen months by Franco in Spain. Then after a year's training in England, he performed a brilliant and breath-taking intelligence and sabotage mission in Brussels. There he met "Francis," another daredevil Belgian of his same age who was serving as a radio operator with another secret mission. The two became fast friends, and later joined OSS to make this mission to Germany together.

Prior to this story, "Francis" had already had more of the war than most people. A student at Johns Hopkins when Hitler attacked his country, he had been unable to get back in time to join the army, so had volunteered for the merchant marine. In this work he was twice torpedoed on the Murmansk run; but tiring of naval duty, for which he had been decorated, he volunteered to become a secret agent and was sent on a mission to Brussels. His mission ended when the Gestapo captured him while in the act of transmitting. After brutal torture, his life was saved when the train that was taking him to Germany for more torture and certain death was attacked by the Resistance and he was freed.

With this background, they had no illusions about the dangers and difficulties involved in their new mission. Experience had proven that, either from devotion to Hitler or fear of the Nazis, almost no German could be trusted. Their greatest problem would be to find safe contacts, without which

it was impossible to function. Two important factors would be in their favor—the millions of foreign workers who were slaving in Hitler's war plants, and the disorganizing effect of the terrific Allied bombings. As we shall see, "Jan" and "Francis" exploited both to the utmost.

On joining OSS in Belgium late in 1944, Jan immediately began to dig up contacts for his Munich mission. Through friends in the Belgian Resistance movement, he met a man of German descent who had proven himself a Belgian patriot during the occupation. This man was well acquainted with German families along the Belgian-German border in the vicinity of St. Vith, which at that time was just inside the American lines. Posing as a Belgian official trying to find information on the whereabouts of the Belgian king, who was a prisoner of Hitler, Jan interrogated many Germans living in and near the front lines. Through relatives he discovered two good leads—families that had been very active in Catholic enterprises, and who could be presumed to be trustworthy anti-Nazis.

The third contact, made by slipping through the lines to a disguised monastery inside Germany, seemed to provide the most reliable contact of all; but on his return trip Jan almost became a German prisoner.

As he tells it:

THE German priests were surprised at seeing us, but agreed to help. They gave me the address of another religious house operated by their order near Munich, and supplied me with the description of a priest who they believed would help me. For identification they offered a password written in Latin on a scrap of yellow paper.

Elated at this development, my guide and I started back toward the American lines in a small car. The guide knew the area very well, and planned to take us up a little-used path that ran through the marshes. It was early in the afternoon when we began the trip. The day was overcast, and soon a fog began to roll in. It became thicker and thicker, and we were forced to turn into the main road. It

Munich

*Illustrated by
John McDermott*

was so dense that you actually could not see your hand in front of you. This fog and others like it had an ominous overtone of which we were not then aware. It blanked out everything, and beneath its cover the Germans prepared the great offensive that was to launch the bitter bloody battle of the Bulge.

That was why on that afternoon on this German road something happened that will seem unbelievable to anyone who has not experienced the incredible thickness of that fog, or known the peculiar situation that existed on that sector of the First Army front. We were creeping along foot by foot, when we gently bumped the vehicle ahead. After a delay of a few minutes, I jumped out to investigate and found an American medical officer peering at the dead motor of his jeep. I was just leaning over to see if I could help him, when suddenly a hand was on my shoulder. Shrouded in mist was the face of a German soldier—he was taking a squint at the motor himself—his face almost touching mine. I was too shocked to say a word. The German looked for a minute, straightened up, shook his head hopelessly, grunted and disappeared into the fog. A whole German column passed us on the opposite side of the road a few minutes later. We couldn't see them, nor they us; but the guttural curses of the German drivers were unmistakable. The whole front was quiet at this time—a few weeks later when Von Rundstedt attacked, we understood why. . . .

With these seemingly reliable contacts in Munich, I felt we were set for our mission, and prepared to leave for London with Francis, my radio operator. While saying good-by to my many friends in Brussels, I ran into an old buddy whom I had known in the Resistance. Although I did not think it necessary, he insisted that I take the information on another contact which he had lined up through the Belgian government. This lead was later to save my life.

The name he gave me was that of a nineteen-year-old Belgian, a member of the Jocist, the Catholic Youth movement. These young men had volunteered to accompany the Belgian workers who had gone to Germany as either



Not a single one failed to talk—although I must admit a few of them took a little persuasion.

forced or volunteer labor. Their purpose was to keep up morale and exert a religious influence on the deportees. My friend had received the youth's name from the chief of the Belgian Jocists. After checking him with his local police and pastor, he had gone to the boy's home. There the mother had given him a letter and her picture, a postcard her son had sent from Munich, several personal keepsakes, and some intimate information that could be known only by his family.

Thus equipped, Francis and I returned to England for our final preparations. Our cover story was to be that we were volunteer Belgian workers who had been employed for two years in Gleiwitz, a manufacturing center in Silesia which had recently been taken by the Russians. (Numerous Belgian deportees had labored in this city.) We studied pictures of the factory where we were supposed to have worked, and memorized every detail we could discover about it. False

working papers were provided for us; our plan was to claim that we had fled from the Russians and headed to Munich, because we wanted to continue to work for Hitler—a story far from perfect, but it was the best available.

The principal objective of our mission was to gather military intelligence and penetrate the German security and underground organizations. The Allied high command already knew that a German underground was being set up to operate in captured German territory. They also were well aware of the fact that the Gestapo, the SS, the SD or security service and similar Nazi groups would be the basis for the "Werewolf" movement. The third reason for the importance of the mission: Bavaria and the Austrian Alps were the center of the widely publicized redoubt to which the Nazis claimed they would retire and carry on the fight for a hundred years, should the rest of Germany be overrun. Information on the development of this ambitious project was obviously of the highest importance; and we knew that its accomplishment involved exposing ourselves to the most desperate criminals and most ruthlessly efficient counter-intelligence agents in all Europe.

IN January of '45 we flew to a town in Eastern France which was to be the jumping-off point for our mission. Our drop was attempted five times in January without success; on four of the sorties we were very lucky not to have been killed when ice threw the plane out of control. These failures washed out the January moon period, and we returned to England for a brief rest before trying it again. Early in March we dropped in a perfectly executed jump. Francis, myself and our one container, which carried the radios, batteries and money, all landed softly in waist-deep snow within a radius of fifteen yards. It was a good start; but within a few hours we were to be in serious trouble.

The plans had been to drop us about six miles from Kraiberg, site of the religious community that I considered my best contact. Assuming that we had been dropped in the right spot, we carefully hid our chutes and container in some thick pine woods and headed north—each with a heavy suitcase. After three hours of travel without spotting a single landmark, we began to suspect that we had been dropped in the wrong place. We had heard a lot of bombing in the area, which we had taken to be the promised diversionary attacks to draw the enemy night-fighters away from our single plane and distract attention from our dropping-place. An hour before dawn we entered a wood and flopped exhausted in the snow. . . . It was nine the next morning when children's voices woke us with a start.

To our horror, we found ourselves only twenty-five yards from a German farm. All that day we lay low; then after dark we started northwest. Still we could not identify a single place on our maps. Cold, hungry and tired, we were now also completely lost.

The next day we met a Polish wood-cutter doing forced labor in the woods. We couldn't understand him, nor he us, but he did point north and say "Trostberg." It wasn't on our maps, but it was a clue. We gave him a few cigarettes and pushed on. To save time, we began using side roads. We passed through several villages—nodding casually to the people. Toward evening in one of these small country places we met up with some French prisoners-of-war. Telling them we were Belgian workers, we inquired where we could get some food and sleep. One of the men offered to try and get us lodging at the farm where he worked, and introduced us to his German foreman. This fellow, a well-fed Nazi, questioned us at some length and then told us we could sleep in a milk-wagon which would take us to Kraiberg in the morning. His searching interrogation had made us very suspicious. We thanked him politely and then ducked back into the woods to take up our trail again.

Early next morning we came to a main road marked by a signpost, and for the first time we learned exactly where we were: the plane had dropped us near Trostberg, almost sixty miles from our pinpoint! We cached the radios and package of money in the



He stared. I spoke rapidly: "Just parachuted in; need your help!"

woods by the road; and then, relieved of our incriminating burden, set out for Kraiberg. A German army truck came by. The officer merely asked who we were; and apparently satisfied by our brief explanation, offered us a lift into the city.

Once in the town, we made for the religious establishment where I was confident we would find our first friendly shelter in Germany. As we came to the address, we were surprised to find a German youth camp on the premises. There was a second large building in the rear, and I decided to head for there. Fortunately my hunch was correct—a priest answered our knock and bade us enter. With high hopes we requested the priest for whom I had the password. The minute he entered the room, a look of surprise on his face, I recognized him from the description that his brother priests had given me several months before. As soon as we were alone, I gave him the password, which he accepted without comment, and then plunged into our story. Immediately his whole manner changed. His tone was coldly abrupt: "You must leave at once. There is absolutely nothing that I can do to help you. Please go away."

This was the man on whom I had been led to base our principal plans for the mission! The priest was so excited and so emphatic that we didn't think it safe to try and press the point. Before we left, he did at least tell us how to get to Munich, gave us a badly needed meal and offered us money, which we refused because we had plenty.

At the railroad station I purchased two tickets for a town twenty miles south of Munich. The train ride was uneventful, except for the excitement of getting off the train at a halfway station to run and buy two tickets for farther passage, because foreign workers were not allowed to travel more than forty miles. At ten in the evening, five bitter weary days after landing in Germany, we finally reached Munich.

OUR first impressions of the city were anything but encouraging. Neither of us had ever been there before; we didn't know a single person; we lacked proper background to our papers, and had no place we could go without risking a fatal arrest. Everywhere there were heaps of rubble. Surprisingly, in spite of the blackout and late hour, thousands of homeless refugees and ragged foreign workers roamed the streets—at least we would not be conspicuous in our wretched condition. Finally we entered a crowded beer-hall, and choosing a table next to a group of French workers, ordered a drink. We listened carefully to their conversation, and



I glanced at Francis. He had been captured by the Gestapo before, and evidently planned to shoot it out.

were amazed to discover that they were exactly what we purported to be—actual refugees from Gleiwitz, who had made their way to Munich in search of work.

Without betraying our identity, we cautiously drew them out and learned the details of their flight across Germany. We spent the whole night in this beer-hall memorizing their story, and immediately revised our own to conform with the dates, route, bombings and other pertinent data from their experience. This lucky break pepped us up considerably, especially when after talking with them we realized that the story we had learned in England would never have held up under the intensive questioning we would soon have to face from the German authorities.

Early next morning we started out to look up the two Catholic families whose relatives had assured me of their anti-Nazi beliefs. But once again we were bitterly disappointed: the street where one of the parties lived had totally disappeared in a mountain of rubble; the second address, a small shop, was completely wrecked and unoccupied. These families and the priest who had turned us down the

day before, had been my chief reliance for launching our mission. Without at least one safe contact, we were helpless; and every hour we were running greater risk of being picked up by the German police or the Gestapo. It was at this point that I happened to recall the Jocist contact I had been given by my friend in the Belgian Resistance, and we headed for the address—our final chance, and a very slim one at that.

The building turned out to be a large garage operated by the SS—the most dangerous Nazis in all Germany. For a few minutes we discussed our prospects, and finally decided to risk it. A German soldier told us where the Belgian workers were, pointing to a tiny group of shack-like barracks in the rear of the garage.

In front of one of these stood a foreign worker; we walked over toward him and asked him if a Jocist lived there. He nodded, and said the man was inside. Motioning to Francis to stay at the door, I pushed open the wooden frame and walked in. There was one man in the room, standing before a mirror shaving. I was staking everything on a single card, and I played it now. Without hesitating a

moment, I walked over to him and laid on the table his mother's picture, the Red-Cross postcard and the picture of himself taken in Munich which he had sent to his family.

Razor in hand, he stared at the table and then slowly raised his eyes to me. I spoke rapidly: "Your mother and family are all right. She sends her love to you. I am a Belgian working for the Americans. I have just parachuted into Germany, and I desperately need your help."

For one terrible moment he stood silent, appraising me. Then he said quietly: "You certainly have plenty of guts!" I had won the gamble, but my legs were shaking as I pulled over a chair and sat down. It took the young Belgian but a few minutes to dress, and then, signaling for Francis and me to follow, he led us out of the SS grounds to a restaurant. His first move was to give us all the latest information on German regulations for foreign workers; then he set about finding us temporary lodging. He managed this by contacting the German sweetheart of another Belgian worker, who took us that evening to the home of an elderly German couple. That night—for a fine price—we



The planes were coming too close; we raced for our shelter.

slept between clean sheets, our first real sleep since we had arrived in Germany six days before.

The next day brought a new problem. Without ration-cards, we would be unable to eat; furthermore, we would be subject to immediate arrest. Fortunately, the request for new ration-cards was not an unusual one; many foreign workers lost their cards in the bombings, a fact that made our visit to City Hall an easier one. Without too many questions, the official issued cards to us. The Jocist then advised us to register immediately with the Arbeitsamt, the control board for foreign workers.

A blustering middle-aged Nazi officer was in charge here. He listened impassively to the story of our supposed flight from Gleiwitz and our passionate pleas to be allowed to work in Munich for the Germans. He began thumbing through our papers—those false documents that showed us to be volunteer workers who had willingly gone to Germany to work for Hitler. We pressed that point with many bitter references to the British and American Air Forces. The Nazi began to loosen up—obviously he was thinking of us as his comrades. He was telling us of his experiences—what a fine time he had had in Belgium during the last war.

His voice droned on; my hands were clenched in anger as I listened to the details of his life of occupation in my country, but I managed to seem merely the interested listener. Finally he stood up; the interview was over. Not only did he agree to sign us up for work in Munich, but when we expressed a preference he insisted on giving us a strong personal endorsement for employment at the very SS garage where our Jocist friend and several other Belgians worked.

This was a magnificent piece of luck. We had deceived two German officials and had got a personal recommendation from one of them! Now we faced our major test—the police. In addition to registering at the Arbeitsamt, every newcomer had to be listed with the police. This was to be the big hurdle.

We found ourselves in a huge room surrounded by detectives. For two hours Francis and I were grilled and grilled again, with every trick question in the book thrown at us. It was the story we had learned from the French slave-workers on our first night in Munich that saved us. The facts were too detailed, the descriptions too personal, for any doubt to remain in the questioners' minds. After those two hours the Munich police stamped our false passports with an imposing seal, giving us permission to stay in Munich until 1947!

In a beer-hall afterward we held a fine celebration with our young Bel-

gian Jocist. We had walked up to the very people who probably were on the lookout for us, got what we wanted from them, and been endorsed to boot! There were only two more important things to be done before our mission could actually get under way: We must persuade the SS to hire us as workers, and we must retrieve our radios and money.

As for the first of these—we both knew there would be no safer place for us to work than for the SS. Furthermore, this garage serviced numerous units going to and from the front; it would be an A-1 place to gather valuable information. We planned our campaign carefully. Several of the Belgian workers (none of them knew our real identity save the Jocist) approached the SS officer in charge with the news that we were old friends of theirs and crack mechanics. This impressed him, but what sold him on us was the personal recommendation from our blustering Nazi official. We were accepted.

Getting the radios was not quite so simple. With our new papers we had no trouble taking a train to the place where we had hidden our equipment. We found it undisturbed and started back, carrying our two suitcases loaded with radios, money and weapons. The train jogged along pleasantly, and as the miles passed, we began to congratulate ourselves on this smooth operation. We were within ten miles of Munich when suddenly the compartment door was pulled back with a jerk. I froze in my seat—in the doorway stood two Gestapo men. Silently they started to check papers and luggage. Francis and I were at the far end of the compartment; sitting next to me was a well-dressed middle-aged German; nearest the door where the Gestapo men began their search were three young men. Above my head, stacked with some other luggage, were our two suitcases. We were trapped with the goods!

I glanced at Francis. His hand was in the pocket where he kept his pistol. He had been captured by the Gestapo once before, and evidently he now preferred to try shooting it out on the moving train rather than to undergo such horrors again. The two officials had finished with the three young men, and they approached the man on my right. There was cold sweat on my forehead; I turned toward the window so that my face would be hidden. The German had flipped out an elaborate Nazi-party pass, and the two officials were now bowing respectfully to him. They asked for his baggage; he indicated the rack overhead where our fatal cases lay beneath his. The Gestapo men looked up, then turned to me. My papers were ready; he scanned them carefully, then checked

Francis. With another final glance at the luggage—evidently they assumed it was all the property of their German—they turned, walked out and slid the compartment door shut with a sharp click. Francis and I sat in frozen silence until the train pulled into Munich; we were both shaking as we carried the bags through the station and out into the comparative safety of the street.

The next problem was where to hide the equipment. Because we spent most of our time at the garage and had already moved to the barracks, we decided this was the handiest place. These barracks were composed of tiny wooden huts just big enough for a rough double-decker bunk. We cut a hole in the floor of our hut and cached the equipment. It seemed a safe-enough hideout; after all, Francis and I were two of the six foreigners who were permitted to work for SS, eloquent testimony of our standing with the enemy. The rest of the personnel, numbering 150, were regular SS troops and officers; they would never suspect that two of their "slaves" would dare to operate a radio right in SS headquarters.

So far, so good; but there would be no operation of the radio if we couldn't get an aerial. Brazenly we got around this by obtaining permission from the Germans for an air-raid warning radio. Once this was installed, we rigged up an aerial for it, meanwhile using it on our secret set as well. It was a poor makeshift at best—Francis could not transmit; but he could pick up messages from London. But we could not complain—the set-up was not too bad for an American secret radio operating right in a nest of SS.

We now set about organizing a network of informers. Within a few days I had a little group of workers among the foreign laborers in the city. For security reasons, most of these people were not aware that they were working for a mission of the Office of Strategic Services; but after some careful screening, I finally chose ten reliable men and united them in a small unit which was prepared to take swift action should the Germans attempt to defend the city when the Allied Armies drew near.

We were in constant danger all this time from the terrible air raids that were blasting Munich. Compared to this constant threat of sudden death, discovery by the Germans seemed insignificant. It was the American air force by day; at night they would be over again, reinforced by the powerful RAF. In between the huge raids, fighter planes patrolling the railroad that ran alongside the garage made life miserable for us. We would sometimes spend as much as ten hours a day in the air-raid shelter, and usual-

ly most of the night. It was a hard mental conflict to face—to hear the roar of the oncoming planes, the dreaded whistle of the bombs and the earth-shaking roar as they found their targets, to know that the Allies were successfully pounding their enemies, and yet to realize that any one of those planes might carry death for us.

The most terrible raid of all came late in March. It was eleven o'clock of a sunny morning when the radio alarm gave the warning: "*Very heavy formations heading for Munich.*" Just a few seconds later we heard them—the huge motors echoing from the distance. We rushed to the roof to watch. They were flying steadily toward us, thousands of big planes in seemingly unending formations. The first bombs began dropping several miles away, the explosions shaking the earth. Within a few moments there were huge clouds of smoke billowing up to block out the noonday sun. The planes were coming too close; we raced for our shelter. It had been built by the SS and was supposedly secure against everything but a direct hit from the largest bombs. Located twelve feet underground, it was covered over on the surface with a huge heap of dirt. The walls were built of concrete seven feet thick, and were reinforced by steel rails. We always took our food, radios, codes and money to the shelter with us, for fear that they would be destroyed in the barracks. Before leaving, we would take down all the windows and open all the doors to minimize the blast effect.

WE stayed in the shelter for four hours that day, the most terrifying experience in my life. Finally the explosions stopped, and cautiously we crept out into the open. The destruction was indescribable. About 150 yards from our garage a foreign workers' camp had gotten it. The factory where the poor devils toiled had also received numerous direct hits. The factory, an important one making precision aircraft parts, was completely flattened. Several hundred of the slave laborers had been killed. Their shelters were of the crudest sort, and had furnished little protection. Hundreds of wounded were running around screaming horribly. Even those who had been injured presented a ghastly appearance with their faces completely black from the concussion, which had broken all surface blood-vessels.

Two terrible cases I can never forget. One makeshift shelter constructed of huge concrete slabs had received a direct hit. About twenty workers were crushed to death inside; but two unfortunates, one French and the other Dutch, were trapped half in and half out by the very heavy concrete walls. They were being slowly squeezed to death, and it would have taken a der-

rick to lift the concrete. Both of them were screaming horribly; and finally in answer to their pitiful supplications, a German officer shot them through the head.

There were no doctors, no Red Cross and no first aid. The entire city was so disorganized that the thousands of victims were largely forced to shift for themselves. When the over-taxed German doctors reached our neighborhood many hours after the raid, they gave assistance only to wounded Germans.

Between raids British and American prisoners were forced to clean up the rubble. I felt very sorry for these chaps, and once when I was cycling past a long line of British paratroopers, the famous Red Devils of Arnheim, I began to whistle the popular British war song, "Roll Me Over." Instantly the whole column picked up the tune, while I pedaled away furiously before the German guards could spot me. I should never have taken such a chance, but I couldn't resist the opportunity to let them know that a friend was near.

BY the end of March we were fairly well established in Munich. If we had been able to transmit our information over the radio, and weren't so pinned down by the constant air raids, our mission would have been functioning perfectly. The SS where we worked seemed to trust us completely; and having plenty of money, we were able to bribe them into giving us many special privileges, which added to our freedom of movement.

We still had made no progress toward penetrating other Nazi organizations, and particularly the Gestapo. Around noon one day a stranger in civilian clothes came into our barracks. Through the open door, I could see that he had a companion waiting in the yard outside. This was enough to put me on my guard.

With no introduction whatsoever he demanded: "Are you Van Brunt and Schmidt?"

"Yes."

"Did you just arrive in Munich?"

"Yes."

I looked over at Francis, and knew from his face he was thinking the same as I: This man was from the Gestapo. Francis was sitting on his bunk, and I saw that his hand was edging slowly toward the pillow under which his pistol was hidden.

Abruptly the German sat down.

"Where do you come from?"

"Gleiwitz. Why? Who are you, to be asking all these questions? Are you from the Gestapo?"

"Could be," he replied with a little smile. "Do you know Trostberg?"

This was the town nearest the spot where we had landed three weeks before. Evidently he had the goods on



Germans began to appear furtively and mutter the fateful words, "Green paint."

us, but for some strange reason he was not ready to arrest us immediately. Well, we would play along; we denied that we had ever heard of Trostberg.

"I don't believe you," the Gestapo man said bluntly. Then, leaning back in his chair, he smiled and went on: "I think you will be interested in a little story I am going to tell you. A few weeks ago we found two personnel parachutes and jump equipment near Trostberg. Two young fellows have been reported in that area heading north. I am sure it is just coincidence, but do you know that their description fits you two perfectly?"

There was no longer any doubt about this. He was from the Gestapo; he knew all about us; and he was playing a cat-and-mouse game. Why didn't he come to the point? There was something strange about his attitude—sarcastic, but not typically arrogant. He had something up his sleeve, and he didn't choose to let us know what it was, just yet.

For several moments more we fenced, each feeling the other out, and yet aware of the other's identity. By now Francis' hand was but a few

inches from his pistol. He would never be taken alive; that I knew. The game went on for a few moments, the German subtly accusing, we evading.

Suddenly Francis sprang in and took the offensive with a sharp question: "You know, don't you, that the war is going to be over very soon, and that the Americans will be here?"

"Yes, of course I know it. Everyone knows it."

"I think that it is a very good thing for you to know this," remarked Francis, and this time he smiled.

The German began to look a little uncomfortable. He kept glancing out of the window as if to assure himself we were unobserved. There was definitely something in the air. I decided to take a long chance:

"Do you like South America?"

He was a little startled. A look of crafty interest passed over his face. Yet he replied sharply enough: "What are you driving at?"

"Oh, nothing special. Do you have any family?"

"Yes, a wife and two children."

"Are they here?"

"Yes, right in town."

While we were talking, Francis reached down under his cot and came up with a roll of five thousand marks, which he tossed on the table in front of the Gestapo with comment: "Maybe you need some money for your family. Times are hard."

The German's eyes widened at the size of the roll. It was probably more money than he had earned in a year. Obviously sorely tempted, he still shook his head.

I pressed our advantage.

"Would you like to go to South America with your family?"

Our mouse was almost in the cage. "Let's talk about it," he answered, "and I will call my friend in." With that, he stepped to the door. His partner, at his signal, came in quickly and sat down. Our friend spoke to him in rapid German for a moment, but all I could catch was that we had made them a good offer. While they were jabbering, the newcomer spotted the huge roll of marks. Francis saw his greedy expression. He tossed another packet on the table. This time each snatched a roll and stuffed it into his pocket. From this moment we knew they were ours.

Francis showed his gun, and we took charge of the situation. He told the Germans that if they pulled anything, they would never get out of the room alive, regardless of whether or not the SS caught us later. He also threatened them that if anything happened to us because of their treachery, the Americans—who would soon be here—would hunt down them and their families and torture them to death. They believed him, because that was the way they operated; they swore that we

could trust them, and promised to do everything that we commanded.

We told them that we were both American officers, and gave them our solemn word that as soon as the American Army arrived, we would arrange for them and their families to be shipped to South America with plenty of money to make a new start in life. This intrigued them greatly, because they were convinced that the Americans intended to shoot every member of the Gestapo they could catch, and Himmler and other high Gestapo officials encouraged this belief. . . .

Both of these traitors turned out to have important positions in the local Gestapo. Emil, the first chap, was head of the investigating section, and his partner Hans an administrative official. They had been assigned to our case when children playing in the woods had discovered our chutes. The Nazi foreman who had questioned us a few days later had given them a good lead, and a check of new registrants with the Munich police had led directly to us. Evidently they had come with some idea of making a private deal, because they had told their superiors that they had found no trace of us. Of course they assured us that they had never favored Hitler but had been forced into the work. We let that one go by, although we had our own ideas on that score.

THEY told us that they could get us complete information on the Gestapo organization all over Bavaria. They confirmed that a *Werwolf* underground organization was already in the process of formation, and that it was to be built on the framework of the Gestapo and other Nazi security services. Orders had been coming in over the teletype from Himmler in Berlin. These were top secret and not available to them, but they said they knew the girl who handled the messages and would see to it that she was brought to us the minute the American troops arrived. Having decided to betray their associates to save their own hides, they were pitifully eager to offer information. We spent a half-hour questioning them and giving them orders for additional data, after which we set up weekly rendezvous in an out-of-the-way beer-hall.

After they left, Francis and I had to decide whether we should trust them or escape to new quarters and start all over again. It was a dangerous game, and we knew that they would sell us out in a minute. However, the stakes were so unbelievably high that we decided it was worth the risk. If they came through with but a fraction of what they had promised us, our mission would have succeeded beyond our fondest hopes.

An anxious week passed. We went to the rendezvous wondering whether

or not the two Germans would show, since it was of course the simplest thing in the world for them to double-cross us at any time. On the hour, they appeared. Hans, the administrative official, brought with him a document which by itself made our entire mission worth-while. It was a carbon copy of the pay-roll for the whole Gestapo organization throughout Bavaria, complete with real names, false names and addresses. With it our forces would have a file of the most dangerous men and women in the entire area. We could hardly believe our luck.

Another sensational bit of information was that Schaeffer, the Gestapo chief for Bavaria, was holding secret conferences with his three chief lieutenants. Our men suspected that these three were to be the leaders of three different sections of the underground, which was now being organized at frantic speed. Instructions from Berlin were that the Gestapo personnel were secretly to infiltrate the mountains south of Munich, with false papers to avoid arrest. There they were to set up the *Werwolf* formations, establish communications with other units, and after things had quieted down a bit following the arrival of the Americans, they were to dispatch men back into Munich to receive further orders.

This was just the information we needed. Ordering our Gestapo spies to keep us posted, we immediately made separate plans on our own to counteract this development.

I sent two trustworthy German girls and three Dutch workers into the mountains to check on all new arrivals and find out all they could on the build-up of the underground, a move that was to prove very valuable later on. To prepare for the arrival of the American troops, I lined up a courier who was to pass through the German lines and return with several walkie-talkies and a supply of arms and explosives, so that I could assist our Army should the Germans try to defend the city.

It was now getting on toward the end of April, and we expected the Americans any day. Surest sign of their imminent arrival was the wild flight of high-ranking Nazis, and the destruction of all evidences of Nazi party allegiance. Our Gestapo friends reported that many of their companions had been given their orders and were about to leave for the mountains.

I decided to set a trap for these key men, and told them to instruct all their associates to report back to a certain address in Munich as soon as they had successfully established themselves. The password was to be "*Grüne Far-*



"Maybe you need some money for your family. Times are hard."

Munich was a madhouse. Thousands of starving foreign workers were looting stores and houses.

be," "green paint," to be used in a sentence when they came to the door.

During the last two weeks in April there was no further bombing of the city, and this very welcome respite enabled us to expand our activities. The thousands of foreign workers were suffering great privations and growing very restive. Many of them were anxious to revolt, but I urged their leaders to keep them under control, for at this point I knew they could not affect the outcome of the war, and that any movement on their part could result only in great loss to themselves. It also became more and more evident that the Germans did not intend to attempt to defend the city. To avoid capture, our SS employers packed up and pulled out.

Finally, on May first, the first Americans arrived. They had been expected for four days, and I was eager to make contact with them. My first sight of the Yanks was a curious one—a little jeepful of drunken soldiers who had got lost and come into Munich by mistake. A few hours later a small American detachment arrived, and immediately I reported to them. Suspicious at first, they finally agreed to send me back to their divisional headquarters.

At Hq. I met the G-2 and told him my fabulous story. His interest was gratifying, and at his order I went back to Munich to work with CIC and the OSS detachment due the next day.

The city was a madhouse. Thousands of starving foreign workers were looting the stores and private houses. Some of them had been working as slaves for years, and their revenge was not a pretty sight. I took over a handsome town house in one of the best sections, the same address to which our Gestapo men had ordered their associates to report. Here my Belgian friends, the two Gestapo men and several anti-Nazi Germans I had enlisted started to work. The best of these latter was a former Munich police official who had just been liberated after nine years in the near-by Dachau concentration camp. He certainly enjoyed hunting down his former oppressors. To Francis and me too, this was the most gratifying part of the war. Strangely enough, our Gestapo agents outdid themselves in eagerness and efficiency. Working with OSS and CIC, to whom I had given copies of the Gestapo pay-roll, we started an immediate roundup of all the Gestapo and other dangerous elements left in Munich.

Within a few days the two girls and three men whom we had sent into the mountains reported back with information that was nothing less than perfect. We organized a series of whirl-



wind raids to bag the underground leaders and escaped Nazis whom they had discovered. Soon afterward, Germans began to appear furtively at our door and mutter a sentence containing the fateful words, "Green paint." Whenever this happened, we would usher the man inside, offer him refreshment and then, with many compliments for a good job, we would interrogate him as to the details of his particular unit of the underground. Then, as soon as we had obtained all possible information on his *Werwolf* associates, we would lock him up and race out to bag all his surprised accomplices. We worked this stunt on eight different occasions, always with very gratifying results.

We made arrests at all hours of the day and night, and between times we would question those whom we had already bagged. Here again our Gestapo traitors proved most helpful. Standing behind one of their former associates, they would signal us as to the questions we should ask, as well as

to whether or not the prisoner was telling the truth. Of the sixty-odd Nazi big-shots we caught, not a single one failed to talk—although I must admit a few of them took a little persuasion.

One of the most satisfying of all the arrests was that of a Gestapo man who had formerly been active in Brussels. Picked up in a routine raid, he was waiting under guard at our headquarters when Francis walked in. Both men recognized each other instantly. The Gestapo man cringed. He had been one of those who had participated in Francis' interrogation a year before when they had beaten him, tied his hands behind his back and after hanging him on a hook by the wrists, had nearly drowned him in an effort to get him to talk. This time Francis supervised the interrogation.

Some of our most spectacular arrests included General Schmidt Voygt, Commanding Officer for the Secret Police of all Germany; Haupt-Sturm-bannführer Wolf, chief of all the German agents in Belgium and



France; the chief of the Nazi espionage net in Switzerland; and the head of one of the top sections of the Bavarian Gestapo. All of these big-time Nazis were disguised and had false papers, but since we already had the goods on them, we broke them down in every instance. I personally arrested the Gestapo leader after surrounding a farmhouse and surprising him, his chief lieutenant and his nude secretary sleeping on the floor.

For six weeks after the fall of Munich we continued this all-out pace. Then we were ordered back to London for final debriefing. It was the one time I was tempted to disobey orders—I certainly hated to take off. Turning over all our leads to the local American authorities, we started packing our gear. We had but one final task—disposal of our Gestapo pair. By this time we were filled only with hatred for them, having watched them time and again glory in denouncing and arresting their former comrades. Their treachery had benefited

us, it was sure; but these men were the lowest rats we ever met. I had also checked up on their past, and discovered that one in particular had been infamous for his brutality in Warsaw.

The day before we left, I ended our little game quite abruptly by arresting them and turning them over to the American Army with a most damaging bill of reference. We hadn't the slightest compunction in double-crossing them; we knew only too well what they and their organization had done.

Back in England we were congratulated on our success and debriefed. I had a joyful reunion with the lovely American WAC who was later to become my wife. Because of our radio silence, for three months she had had no word of my fate. It was just as well she didn't know the spot we were in, as she probably would have been even more worried. We made up for lost time and soon became engaged.

Later I went back to Munich to see if I could be of any further help, but found the situation was well in hand:

the whole *Werwolf* movement had been nipped in the bud, and most of the Nazi big-shots were under arrest—not a few of them as a direct result of our mission.

Now I am married and living in the United States. I have taken out my first citizenship papers, and am determined to spend my life in this great country. However, part of my heart will always be in Belgium—particularly with those thousands of Belgian heroes who fought the lonesome, dangerous battle against Hitler as secret agents.

Author's Note—For achievements during the war, "Jan" and "Francis" the principal agents whose story is here told, have received the following awards: United States Silver Star; from Belgium—Knight in the Order of King Leopold; Escape Cross; Croix de Guerre with Cluster; the French Croix de Guerre and a British Mention in Dispatches and Member of the British Empire.

A Ship Comes

The curious story of the destroyer *Stewart*, sunk off Java earlier in the war—and found afterward at Kure strangely altered.



SHE had to be fumigated first when they found her in the Kure navy yard. "Even so, she never got rid of that Jap stench," said the bos'n of the crew that brought her home. "She had carried Japs for too long."

She was full of rats, lice and fleas. It took a powerful load of DDT to make her habitable again for that last voyage of hers.

She was a queer-looking craft when they found her tied up in the Kure yard. She had one of those trunked double-stacks like an inverted Y, in which Nip naval architects delight. She carried a mongrel tripod foremast, almost like a battleship's, but the likes of which no one had ever seen on a craft her small size. On her flush forward deck rose, rather unmotivated, an extra gun platform. And from her flying bridge protruded, like the eyes of a horned toad, the hornlike Jap radar instruments. On

her bow she carried the two accent-like marks with a dot above them which form the Jap letter P, and a number, P-102, that was all. Nobody could have ever recognized her for the old American flush-decker she had once been—and which she was destined to become once again, just long enough to come home and die.

It was, in fact, quite some time before a curious soul in an idle moment began to scratch at the thick coat of paint that covered a bronze plaque in her wardroom and thus found out her true identity. The men detailed to

inventory the equipment and wrecks in the Kure yard had their hands full. The yard was cluttered up with the remnants of Japan's once mighty battle fleet. There were the wrecks of the ancient battle-wagon *Haruna*; of the *Ise* and *Hyuga*, queer hybrids, looking like a battleship forward and like a carrier aft; of the cruisers *Tone* and *Oyodo*, and of an assortment of carriers and other craft, all of them bombed to pieces by planes from Halsey's Third Fleet carriers, in the last few weeks before the surrender. Not until October did the wreckers and inventory-takers get around to the queer-looking craft lying dejected and forlorn in one corner of the yard.

Home to Die

by RICHARD A. SHAFTER



It took a powerful load of DDT to make her habitable again for that last voyage.

the *P-102*. Then they discovered to their surprise that she was a ship that had been struck off the Navy's list back in March '43. She had once been the *DD-224*, the U.S.S. *Stewart*.

She was not the only U.S. warcraft to suffer the ignominy of being taken and put to work by the enemy. The *Wake* and *Luzon*, too, were captured. The Japs boasted at the time of "the exalted might of His Imperial Majesty's Fleet," which had been able to "capture mighty American warcraft." The fact of the matter was that both the *Wake* and *Luzon* were but tiny river gunboats, sister ships of the *Panay*, which was the first victim of foul Jap attack, three years before Pearl Harbor. The *Luzon* was but 560 tons, and the *Wake* even smaller, 370 tons. Neither one of these "mighty American warcraft" was armed with anything more formidable than a few three-inch rifles and a dozen MGs. And even that puny

armament, together with all other gear, had been stripped off the *Wake* when the Japs found her lying defenseless in the Hwangpo River off Shanghai.

As for the *Luzon*, the Japs had it not quite as easy. At least she had a chance to get a few licks of her own in before she was captured after the fall of Corregidor.

When the Japs took them both into service after repairing them, they gave them new names, after tranquil bays of their home islands. The *Luzon* became the *Karatu*, and the *Wake* the *Tataru*. But the *Stewart* was not even graced with a name. *P-102*, the ideograph and numerals, designated her as a patrol-craft used exclusively for the protection of Nipponese home waters. The Japs did not trust themselves in her on the high seas. She had suicidal tendencies.

The *Stewart* was no longer a new ship when the Japs found her, aban-

doned at Surabaya, Java. She had been one of the little 1200-ton, flush-decked "four-pipers" of 1917-'19 vintage, that had come a little bit too late for the first World War and by all rights should have been a bit too old for the second. On September 15, 1936, the sixteenth anniversary of her commissioning, she should have been mustered out as over-age.

She had been launched on March 3, 1920, from the yard of Cramp & Sons, Philadelphia. Her armament, as compared with that of more modern destroyers, was not impressive. She carried but four 4-inch .50-caliber guns, one 3-inch .23-caliber AA rifle, and twelve torpedo tubes, triple-banked. But with what little she had, she had done her level best during those years between the wars to maintain America's status as a first-class seapower in the Far East, as could be expected of a ship that bore the proud name of red-headed Charles Stewart of War of 1812 fame—who rose from tanner's apprentice to the rank of rear admiral, the highest the Navy of his days had to offer. He skipped the brig *Syren* before Tripoli when the *Corairs* finally sued for peace, and in "Old Ironsides," the famous frigate *Constitution*, he fired the last shot of the Second War with England when he tied into two enemies at once in mid-Atlantic, the *Cyane* and *Levant*, fully two months after the Peace of Ghent had been signed.

If the story of the man Stewart was known to the Japs, it must have tickled their mordant Oriental humor to take his namesake ship under their own flag. For more than three years she served under the Jap sun ensign, until the occupation forces found her in Kure and undid her shame by hoisting the Stars and Stripes on her again.

HER voyage from Kure to Terminal Island, Cal., could have tried the patience of a saint. It lasted four months. Engineering experts blamed it all on the junkyard the Japs had assembled below her decks and called her machinery. The twenty men who volunteered to get her home had their own opinions about it. They still swear that the old ship didn't want to come home. She was ashamed, they said, that she had fallen into the hands of the Japs, and she wanted to commit suicide rather than face the land of her birth again.

If her topsides were almost unrecognizable as those of a former U.S.

flush-decked four-piper, her in'ards were an even greater mystery. Her Parsons turbines were still there, true enough, but her four White-Forster oil-burning boilers had been exchanged for boilers of Jap manufacture that could take either coal or oil, whichever was handier. As if they didn't trust that new power plant any too far, the Japs had in addition installed a Diesel auxiliary, that was to provide light and power when the engines were shut down in harbor, or when they broke down, which must have happened quite frequently. That Diesel was the balkiest piece of machinery the black-gang in her crew had ever known. Chief Machinist's Mate George H. Maddox, of Newark, N. J., found a name for it. He called it "Tojo." Before it could be put to work, it had first to be started by a tricky Jap air-compressor. Her crew finally gave up battling with these pieces of junk, and did with kerosene lamps instead electric lights.

When she left Kure, it was hoped she would hold together long enough to reach Guam. But they had to make for Okinawa instead, under whatever forced draft her museum's pieces of machinery were capable of, to stop her leaks. They left Oke on November 11, 1945, still hopeful. Two days out, the seams opened again. Soon she took in enough water to keep the pumps going twenty-four hours a day. The last day of the voyage the Diesel went on strike, and the wheezing pumps gave up the ghost. They had to send a tug out from Guam to tow her in. She had no more than a foot of freeboard to spare when they got her into dock there.

At Guam they patched up her leaks as best they could, and still in tow, sent her to Kwajalein, where her dilapidated engines were to be put into working order. The "Kwack" shipwrights and engineers did their best. It became a point of pride with her skipper, Lieut. Commander Harold H. Ellison, of Berkeley, Cal., and her executive, Lieutenant Grady Burns, of Little Rock, Ark., to take her to Pearl Harbor under her own power.

Again and again the collection of engineering oddities broke down on the grueling voyage. A few times Maddox and his gang were able to patch up that floating junkyard, but the engines were idle so much that Noel B. Ray, of Ruleville, Miss., the chief commissary steward, became worried whether he had enough beans to keep the men alive until they reached Pearl. Eventually they had to call out a tug to pick them up and guide them into Torpedo Junction. On that last lap a gale tore the rivets out of her rotted plates. "It was only the paint that held her together," said Chief Bos'n's Mate John Finken-hoper, Jr., of Germantown, Pa.

At Pearl Harbor she was once more "reconstructed," as Radioman Kenneth M. Ritchie, of Albemarle, S. C., and other Southerners among her crew termed it. Nobody trusted the reconstruction very far. Lieutenant Burns had by now developed the habit of keeping all the ship's papers handy in a mailbag, with a lifejacket attached. And her crew had got to laying bets among them whether she would ever make it. Gundmunder Fredericksen, S2c, roundly said, "No!" He had dreamed she would never see land again, he said. But the tow-head was an Icelander. Like many another Viking, he was gifted with second sight and other queer notions. There were still some takers for his bet, but the odds were becoming increasingly longer. It looked as if he might be right, at that. To most of them it was strictly a sporting proposition to wait and see what would happen next. They fell to making miniature lifejackets for their two pets, Queenie, which nobody owned to have brought aboard in circumvention of Navy regulations but which had been with them from the beginning, and Shorty, a dog of opposite sex, who had just strolled nonchalantly aboard at Kwajalein.

There was a high-point man among them, Gerald A. Sharer, EMlc, from Clovis, Cal. He was as eager as any man to take off his blues and see the girl next door again. At every stop they made—at Okinawa, Guam, Kwajalein, Pearl Harbor—he was asked whether he wouldn't like to go home on his points as a passenger in one of the "Magic Carpet" ships. "Leave 'er?" Sharer would answer. "No sir! I joined her when we took her back from the Japs to bring her home. I wanna see what she's gonna do next."

SHE did plenty, even during that last lap from Hawaii to the Golden Gate. It had been decided to bring her home in tow of the *ATF-148*. But she didn't take to towlines kindly. All the way down she reared and bucked like a horse in a strange stable. She parted her lines a dozen times, preferably during the night and in the thick of rain squalls, so that it would be hard to find her again. "The old gal just doesn't want to come home," her boys said.

Almost in sight of the California Coast they ran into a three-day gale. She was buffeted so badly that this time not even her paint could save her when the rivets began to pop. In the light of kerosene lamps they shifted her balking hand-pumps from one compartment to the other. When they had the last one dry, they had to begin over again; it was pump or sink.

Somehow they managed it, even though just outside the Golden Gate she made her last and most deter-

mined attempt to break loose and commit suicide. At the entrance of San Francisco Bay she tore loose from her towline again. Tides and current caught her and nearly threw her on the rocks of Point Lobos. Her twenty-man scratch crew worked like Trojans to keep her from having her will. But no anchor would hold on the rocky bottom. Finally they managed to get another towline across to the naval tug, *ATF-148*. Excellent seamanship on the part of the tug's skipper got her clear of the rocks. After that the old *Stewart* consented to let herself be berthed. It was the first time in twenty-five years that the old destroyer had reached American soil again.

LIEUT. COMMANDER ELLISON declared after she was docked that much, indeed most, of the credit of keeping the old girl afloat had to go to her executive, Lieutenant Burns. But then, Burns had a very personal reason for seeing the ship safely back to the States. He had been a member of her crew in 1942, when she was abandoned at Surabaya, where the Japs picked her up.

Lieutenant Burns is a "mustang,"—that is, he came by his gold stripes and the star of the line the hardest possible way, "through the hawse-hole." The veteran of eighteen years naval service was a machinist's mate first class aboard the *Stewart* when the war came to the Pacific. Together with the *Parrott*, *Bulmer* and *Parker*, the *Stewart* was then a member of Desdiv 58, stationed at Manila. Two other destroyer divisions, 57 and 50, the cruisers *Marblehead* and *Houston*, and a handful of old S-type submarines, were the sum total of our Asiatic Fleet, which Admiral Thomas C. Hart took down to the Dutch Indies to fight a delaying action against the triphibian Jap invasion.

Burns was aboard when the *Stewart*, flagship of Commander Thomas H. Binford, commodore of Desdiv 58, screened the *Houston* and *Marblehead* and the Dutch cruiser *DeRuyter* in that fight in Madoera Strait in February 4, 1942, from which both *Marblehead* and *Houston* retired limping and burning after a severe pummeling from Jap aerial attackers. The *Stewart* and *Edwards* (John D. Edwards, DD-216) rode watch and ward on the cruisers as they retreated to the base at Tjilatjap on the Java south coast, where there was the only dry-dock that could accommodate them.

Burns was present at the Battle of Bali, February 20, when the *Stewart* led Desdiv 58 into Badoeng Strait off Bali, where the Jap invasion fleet was gathering for the jump-off to Java. Earlier that night a cruiser force under the Dutch Admiral Karel W. F. Doorman had already made a raid on that Jap anchorage off Bali.

When Desdiv 58 arrived on the scene—it now included besides the *Stewart* and the *Edwards*, the *Parrott* and *Pillsbury* (DD-218 and -227)—the fires set by Doorman's gunnery on a number of Jap ships, large and small, were still burning lustily. The destroyers couldn't very well miss—the anchorage was that full of shipping. They rode through there at high speed, dropping their tin fish to port and starboard, and taking potshots from their guns at everything they passed.

The *Stewart* found herself caught squarely in the searchlight of a Jap cruiser. It blinded her gun-crews and lookouts. But very obligingly a big Jap mine-layer turned his own searchlight on the cruiser. The *Stewart's* skipper, Lieut. Commander Harold P. Smith, ordered two tin fish tossed at the Jap. The *Parrott*, racing along in the *Stewart's* wake, let him have a broadside in passing, and lookouts on the *Pillsbury* openly watched awe-struck and open-mouthed as the big Jap cruiser was lifted bodily from the water, broke in two in midair, and sank from sight. The *Stewart* and *Edwards* were also credited with additional torpedo hits on another cruiser, a large transport, and that mine-layer.

The searchlight operator on the mine-layer had soon seen the mistake he had made by illuminating the cruiser as a welcome target for the DDs. He was now trying to focus on the swift-moving raiders. By luck he caught the *Edwards*, skippered by Commander Harry E. Eccles, just as she was passing halfway between two Jap cruisers. A broadside from either would have blown the little tin can to smithereens. Before the cruisers' gunners could rub their eyes clear from the surprise at seeing an American destroyer alongside, the *Stewart* came to the rescue. Lieut. Commander Smith had dispensed his torpedoes freely and had none left to take care of the mine-layer and the searchlight. Smith did the next best thing. From a distance of five hundred yards he had his gunners fire at the light. They shot the gleaming cyclops' eye out with their first salvo, and the *Edwards* won clear.

THE Japs, on the other hand, did not exactly excel in gunnery that night. Having come through one attack only a few hours earlier, they at first didn't seem to know what hit them. When they got their wits together, they let fly with everything they had, even at the danger of drilling each other. There were a number of other big Jap cruisers in that congregation, and it was a miracle that our destroyers ever got away alive. As it was, the *Stewart* took about all an old tin can could take and stay afloat. One 8-inch shell from a Jap cruiser went right through her, from

starboard to port, and left her without exploding. But the Japs had got her range, and the next salvo bracketed her neatly. It was only a question of seconds when they would score another direct hit. When it came, it was not a single shell but three of them, that landed squarely on the little can. One of them blasted the *Stewart's* steering-gear to Kingdom Come, and she had to get out of there fast. She did, steering with her engines all the way back to Surabaya.

The two exploits of his ship in the Battle for Java eventually netted Commander Smith the Navy Cross and one of those rousing Broadway receptions with New York's inimitable "Little Flower" doing the honors. And Queen Wilhelmina came to Washington several months later to bestow her personal thanks and some decorations of her own on Smith and Eccles and Commander Binford, the commodore of Desdiv 58, and on Admiral Hart and Rear Admiral William A. Glassford. But whatever well-deserved plaudits the heroic actions of Admiral Hart's little ships eventually won, they had only delayed the Jap invasion of Java.

A FEW days after the Battle of Batavia Strait, the Dutch had to begin their retreat across Java, blowing up their oil-wells behind them and whatever else could benefit the enemy. Surabaya, too, had to be evacuated. All military and naval installations were thoroughly demolished. The last one to be blown up was the Perak drydock. With it went the last hope of repairing the *Stewart* and getting her back into the fight. But new destroyers were coming off the ways at home almost daily. The *Stewart's* veterans, including her skipper and Lieutenant Burns, were needed at home to form the backbone for new ship's crews.

The *Edwards* remained. Commander Eccles was to see to it that his own ship's sister vessel was properly disposed of. The Dutch put some dynamite charges into the Perak dock; then they took it under fire from land and ship's batteries. The dock refused to sink. So they ran the disabled *Stewart* in there, hoping to sink her together with the dock. A flight of Jap bombers almost relieved them of the worry. One bomb hit the *Stewart* squarely amidships. Others dropped close enough to lift her off her keelblocks and throw her on her side. The dock, too, began to leak. Still, it did not sink.

Five men from his own crew were told off by Commander Eccles to stand by and see that the old ship and her drydock cradle were properly demolished. Then what was left of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet pulled out for Australia.

COMMANDING the five-man demolition team was a newly made, inexperienced ensign. Its backbone was a CEM, James K. Brody by name. The story of these five expendables reads like an adventure thriller. Chances were that the Japs would catch them. They got away, however. But they too failed to sink the *Stewart*.

They used all the TNT they had, and for good measure put an additional charge in the Perak dock. Then they retired to a safe distance. They were not going to blow their charges until the Jap invasion fleet hove into sight.

They had not long to wait. But when they pushed the plungers down into their batteries, the charges merely tore a hole into the *Stewart's* keel-plates, and the drydock took twelve feet of water but once more failed to sink for good. That is how the Japs found the *Stewart*.

Chief Brody meanwhile had kept his eyes peeled for a chance to get away. They were on their own now. The Navy was no longer providing transportation for them. By good luck he found an old abandoned motorcar. During the two days they waited for the Japs to come, he worked all out to get the piece of junk to run. Just as the Jap fleet hove into sight, he gave the crank an experimental twist, and to his own surprise the motor caught and kept on purring. The moment they blew their charges they hopped into the antique and made for the interior.

They had no maps, no provisions, but they had the proverbial U. S. man-o-war-men's luck. With the Jap advance guards close at their heels, they reached the Java south coast two days later. Brody spotted a Dutch merchant steamer lying in the harbor. Her native crew had jumped ship. Only a tearful skipper, a stocky mate and two white quartermasters were still aboard. Brody struck a bargain with the lachrymose skipper of the ancient tub. There were some Dutch and British seamen and civilians, some stray diplomats and a few American mining engineers hanging around the waterfront, all hankering to get away. Brody invited them aboard the Dutch ship, organized a crew from among them—what he needed most were firemen and coal-passers; for the tub was an ancient coal burner—appointed himself chief engineer of the whole works, and cleared out of the harbor just as the Japs began pasting it from the air. A providential rain-squall came up and hid the slow old scow from the attackers.

Three weeks later Brody reported at U. S. Naval Headquarters at Freemantle, Australia, with a broad Irish grin on his mug. "He didn't have to report," said Comdr. Eccles. "His mere presence and the grin told the story."

Making Ends

IN THE NEAR FUTURE ONE OF THE LONGEST VEHICULAR TUNNELS IN THE UNITED STATES—THE 9,177-FOOT BROOKLYN TO BATTERY TUNNEL—WILL BE HOLED THROUGH. SINCE 1940 (WITH INTERRUPTIONS DURING THE WAR) THIS \$85,000,000 ARTERY HAS BEEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION. IT IS TO BE OPENED IN 1949.

At left: The day previous to the meeting of the sections of the Hoosac Tunnel, Nov. 27, 1873. The 4.73 miles long Hoosac Tunnel, near North Adams, Mass., was started in 1855 and completed in 1876, at the cost of nearly 200 lives and \$20,000,000.

Below: Contemporary conception of an invasion of England by air, water, and tunnel, 1802. At that time French mining engineer Mathieu submitted plans for a Channel tunnel, and Napoleon started negotiations with English Prime Minister Fox. The outbreak of war stopped the project; it was undertaken many years later, but never completed.



Below: The Thames Tunnel which connects the London boroughs Rotherhithe and Wapping demonstrated the first use of shield which Sir Marc Isambert Brunel, the builder of the tunnel, invented.



Completion of the St. Gothard Tunnel: Arrival at Airolo of the first train coming through the tunnel, March 2, 1880. In 1872 the work on the 9.3 miles long St. Gothard Tunnel started. In 1881 the first passenger train ran through it. The tunnel lies between Coschenen and Airolo in Switzerland, serving as main-artery for the railroad traffic from Northern France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany to Italy.

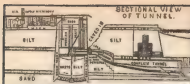


Firing the last blast to complete the perforation of the Hoosac Tunnel, Nov. 27, 1873. Compressed air drills and nitroglycerin found their original use in America in this great technical enterprise.

Meet

At right: Fatal accident at the building of the first Hudson River Tunnel, July 21, 1880. Construction on the two tubes Hudson River Tunnel, from Morton St., Manhattan to Hoboken, started in 1874. Compressed air chambers were used at this project for the first time. On June 21, 1880, the compressed air blew a hole through the soft silt of the roof of the northerly tube 360 ft. from the Hoboken shaft, and the water entering drowned the twenty men in the tube. In 1883 work stopped for lack of funds; both tubes were completed in 1908.

Below: A driller in the Mont Cenis Tunnel. Pietro Bamba, in despair about a love-affair, threw himself between the sharp points of the pneumatic borers and the rock, dying a terrible death before the machines could be stopped.



Old prints from Three Lions, Schoenfeld Collection.



The pneumatic boring machine was first used in the Mont Cenis perforation, in 1862. The average progress 7.7 ft. per day. By hand labor, the average progress had been not more than 9 inches per day.



Traversing Mont Cenis before the inauguration of the Mont Cenis Tunnel Railroad: Stage-coaches were converted into sleds during winter-time; and voyagers between Italy and France had to pass the Alps in long, wearisome, and often dangerous coach- or sleigh-rides.



Meeting of workmen from opposite sides in center of St. Gothard Tunnel, Feb. 29, 1880. The two headings joined with a horizontal difference of only 2 inches, and a lateral of 13 inches.

Suddenly the muffled blast of an explosion from deep within the ship reached the boarding party.



THE skipper is dead now. He died the way perhaps most Navy men would prefer when their time must come—in action.

The President of the United States at the time, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, also are dead; but the living influence of these three leaders made possible an unheralded trial which ended recently in a quiet and austere courtroom in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

As a result of that trial, sixty-seven Navy officers and men may collect three thousand dollars apiece in reward for eleven days of danger and valor on the high seas. Other awards to the Navy will bring the total to more than \$350,000.

The case was the first salvage award on behalf of the United States Navy since the year 1839, more than a century ago.

The skipper was Captain Theodore Edson Chandler, who had become commanding officer of the light cruiser U.S.S. *Omaha* less than a month before the memorable gray dawn of November 6, 1941. The United States was not at war, but three of its Naval vessels had been torpedoed and sunk by German submarines.

On that morning the *Omaha* was at general quarters with all guns manned during the hour before sunrise.

Captain Chandler looked out from the bridge of the *Omaha* to where, less than a mile ahead on the port bow, steamed the destroyer U.S.S. *Somers*. Her two-tone blue and gray coating of paint was just becoming visible in the early dawn. Streaming from behind the destroyer was her churning white wake, gracefully rounding as the *Somers* made a turn.

The two vessels were returning from a point near the African coast, to which they had been diverted when a British merchantman mistakenly reported a submarine in the vicinity. Their return destination was Recife, and on this morning they were steaming in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, halfway between Brazil and Africa, and less than one degree north of the equator.

Sixteen minutes after the *Omaha* had sounded general quarters, a solitary puff of smoke arose from beneath the horizon and was sighted from off the starboard bow.

Captain Chandler, commanding the two-vessel task group on their patrol of the American Neutrality Zone, promptly ordered an increase in speed to twenty-five knots, full speed ahead for the old warrior *Omaha*. The vessel from which the smoke had issued soon hove into sight at a distance of ten miles.

At 5:41 A.M. the unidentified vessel was close enough for the *Omaha* to signal by searchlight. The reply came after a long pause—a series of unintelligible dashes carrying no meaning.

At six o'clock the *Omaha* and the *Somers* reached and passed the vessel. From her mainmast flew the flag of the United States, and on the stern above the vessel's turning propellers were painted in white the words "*Willmote—Philadelphia*." The ship had hoisted KIGF, the international call letters of the American steamship *Willmote*.

The *Willmote's* crew was dressed in a variety of civilian clothes, and uniforms with narrow-brimmed, floppy caps which might have been picked up in any European port. They presented the normal appearance of any American merchant-marine crew.

Everything seemed in order except that the master of the *Willmote* had failed to answer signals properly; to Captain Chandler, this was an error of gross negligence.

The Captain reversed the *Omaha's* course and came about parallel to the course of the *Willmote*. Then, by means of flag signals, he commanded the other vessel to stop.

As both vessels began to lose speed, the Captain took the megaphone and leaned over the windbreak of the bridge.

"Why don't you answer my signals?" he shouted.

On the bridge of the other vessel several officers turned into a hurried consultation.

When the Captain saw no attempt was being made to reply, he shouted: "Where are you from?"

Finally, one of the officers raised a megaphone: "Capetown."

"Where are you bound?"

"New Orleans."

"Why don't you answer my signals?" the Captain repeated.

The reply was a sullen glare from the *Willmote* officers. Believing it might be difficult for them to understand his voice, the Captain had another officer ask the next question:

"What cargo are you carrying?"

The answer came back: "General cargo."

Consulting a registry of merchant ships of the world, Captain Chandler saw that except for the stern, the features of the *Willmote* checked with the silhouette in the book.

The Captain called for Lieutenant George Carmichael to report to the bridge from his general quarters station. When he arrived, he received his orders: "Go over to the *Willmote*

The Omaha Incident

The recent salvage award to the men of the *Omaha* and the *Somers* makes the story of their achievement specially timely.

by LT. COLLIN OSTRANDER, U. S. N. R.



and give the skipper hell for not answering signals properly."

With the tall, muscular lieutenant would go the armed boarding party of which he was the senior officer. Four men armed with .45-caliber automatics, and another four with submachine-guns comprised the party, which had been especially set up to investigate strange ships and to ask any questions considered necessary by Captain Chandler.

As the Lieutenant hurried from the bridge, the Captain called for Machinist Furman Waltrip to report to the bridge with his camera.

ABOUT this time the *Somers*, patrolling on the other side of the merchantman, signaled that two packages had been dropped over the side of the *Willmoto*.

Receiving the message, the Captain fretted impatiently. Then, glancing toward the *Willmoto*, he saw that the international call letters were being hastily jerked down from the halyards. In their place were run up two other flags, identified as FM.

They meant: "I am sinking. Please send boats for passengers and crew."

The boarding party was now on its way to the *Willmoto*. Sitting in the boat, Lieutenant Carmichael wondered what the flags meant, but it was impossible to tell without an international signal book.

As the boarding party neared the starboard side of the *Willmoto*, several crew members were observed on their way down a ladder which had been thrown over the side near a waiting boat. Others on deck were throwing their luggage into the boat.

Lieutenant Carmichael stood up in his boat as it approached. "Why are

you leaving your ship?" he demanded of them.

From an officer standing at the top of the ladder came the reply: "This is a German ship, and it is sinking."

Suddenly the muffled blast of an explosion from deep within the ship reached the boarding party. The stern of the vessel rose slightly in the water and settled back slowly. Smoke belched forth from the funnel and the air ventilators.

The Lieutenant drew his gun. "Get your men back aboard and stop this ship from sinking, or all of you will go down with it."

A second blast shook the ship, and the men on the ladder turned around to look suddenly at Lieutenant Carmichael. Then the officer at the head of the ladder gave an order in German, and the men reluctantly clambered aboard.

Lieutenant Carmichael and Chief Henry Coronado, a swarthy, heavily built Puerto Rican who had been picked especially as a right-hand man in case of trouble, followed them up the ladder. They were met on deck by the officer, who was dressed in a soiled white uniform. He had a long fleshy nose and a high, slanting forehead.

"I am Hans-Hermann Schmidt," he declared in a clipped British accent which might have been acquired at an English college, "one of two first officers aboard. This is the German ship *Odenwald* and it has been scuttled. You and your men must leave the ship immediately; it will sink in twenty minutes."

"Where is the master of the ship?"

"The master has already abandoned ship." He indicated the other side. The Lieutenant saw for the first time that two boats had been launched from that side, with part of the German crew. The master of the *Odenwald* would be in one of them.

With the rest of the armed boarding party guarding the Germans, Lieutenant Carmichael and Chief Coronado, accompanied by two German officers, descended four flights of grease-covered ladders into the motor-room for an inspection of the damage.

Japanese smoke bombs, flame torches, and many opened cans of benzine were

found on the oily floor plates of the motor-room, where a pall of acrid smoke filled the air. Water could be heard gushing into the space, but the smoke was too thick to allow further inspection.

When the four returned on deck, they saw the ship was slowly taking a starboard list.

Aboard the *Omaha*, Machinist Waltrip had been taking pictures from the bridge. When Captain Chandler received the message that the ship was German and was being scuttled, he turned to Waltrip: "Get some of your engineers from the salvage party and give Carmichael a hand over there." Waltrip had advanced from second-class fireman to warrant machinist in eleven hard years of stiff competition, and had won the fullest confidence of the Captain. His dark goatee beard jolted as he snapped, "Aye-aye, sir," and left the bridge on the run.

The time was 7:04 A.M.

Headed by Waltrip and Carpenter Abner Alton, the salvage party consisted mostly of engineers and a few deckhands and gunner's mates.

By the time the party reached the *Odenwald* and the engineers had reported to the motor-room, a damp draft of air had cleared the smoke somewhat. The cool air was being expelled into the motor-room from Number Four cargo hold aft of it—the reason being, they realized, was that Number Four hold was flooding.

The Germans had cut two manholes in the bulkhead and had opened the shaft-alley hatch, but they had neglected to dispose of either the nuts or the manhole plates, and had tried but failed to remove the wheel for closing the shaft-alley hatch.

ENGINEERS were able to close off the openings before the water spilled over from the hold, but two three-inch streams of water were gushing directly into the motor-room and an eight-inch sea-valve had been left open to admit the sea.

By the time these openings were closed off, the cargo hold was flooding freely and the starboard list was increasing.

Their problems increased. The two generators had been left running, but

the electrically driven pumps had been secured. The markings on the pumps read *Anlassbehälter, Von Einblasepumpe und Zudenahlassluftbehälter*—and none of them could read German.

The main engines were Diesels, and only Chief Earl Gerald had had even the most remote experience with that type of propulsion unit.

And there was always the fear of another unexploded time bomb hidden somewhere deep inside the ship.

The men worked at their tasks desperately, and at times, vociferously; and on that day none of them would have believed that five and a half years later a Federal Judge would review their heroism in a District Court of the United States.

ON deck, searching parties found five gallons of benzine, a full box of pyrotechnics, and a number of rockets and signal stars. The screens on all ventilators had been removed and replaced with canvas coverings, and the evident intent of the Germans had been to throw the benzine down the ventilators, followed by any of the pyrotechnics for ignition. In a short time, the draft through the ventilating system would turn the ship into a raging holocaust.

At the base of the mainmast a signalman hauled down the United States flag the Germans had flown, secured a Nazi swastika below it, and ran the two up into the slight breeze. The weather was warm, and the sea was moderately calm.

Another signalman reported to Lieutenant Carmichael. He had also found a message in the radio-room. Pencil in English on a scrap of cheap paper was: *QQQQ GQKM AT 0-55 NORTH 27-47 WEST. ATTACKED BY SURFACE RAIDER.*

In Berlin, then, Lieutenant Carmichael realized, the news had already been received. Germany and the United States were not at war. What would be Germany's reaction?

Nazi submarines in the vicinity would have been notified immediately. Captain Chandler had already sent up two scout planes with orders to search a circular area around the *Odenwald* to a radius of fifteen miles.

A little man with a hunted, unhappy face climbed the sea ladder and was escorted to the Lieutenant. He was Captain Gerhard Loers, master of the *Odenwald*. Approaching Carmichael, he spread his arms wide, indicating approximately five feet.

"The bombs were this big," he exclaimed. "You cannot save this ship. It will list first to starboard, then to port, and then it will sink. You must remove your men and allow us to leave." His English was very broken.

"Are there any more that have not exploded?"

"Nein, there are none. No more are needed. This ship will sink."

"Where did the bombs explode?"

"Under Number Four cargo hold—which is loaded full. The bombs were placed there before the hold was loaded, just as I took over command of the vessel in Yokohama—"

"What did you say?"

"Yokohama. The ship had been there for nearly two years after the war broke out in Europe in 1939. We were on our way to German-occupied Bordeaux, and I had told my crew we would be safe if we got through this day. *Gott im Himmel*, we had been at sea forty-six days and had only five to go!"

The Lieutenant shrugged impatiently. "How do we get to the source of the flooding?"

"The bombs tore out the bottom of the ship beneath Number Four cargo hold. You cannot move all that cargo in time. A diver might be able to reach it from the outside—"

The German master looked weak and shaken. Hans-Hermann Schmidt had said Loers was afflicted with heart trouble. The Lieutenant called a guard to take the German to the *Omaha* for medical treatment. The rest of the German crew already had been taken over for detention, and now only Hans-Hermann Schmidt remained aboard under guard.

LEUT. CARMICHAEL was worried. After nearly two hours aboard, they had not been able to start a single pump in operation. Water was rushing through the hole or holes that could not be reached, and the starboard list showed no indication of stopping at its present six degrees.

The ship was topheavy with many bales of raw rubber stacked around the bridge as a barricade against small-arms fire. In its unstable condition, the ship might easily and suddenly capsize.

Escape for the thirty or more men below decks would be almost an impossibility. For those in the motor-room, there were four flights of greasy, slippery ladders to climb.

Some of the men on deck might be able to jump from the ship—into water known to be infested with sharks.

"Do everything possible, but do not risk the lives of our men," Captain Chandler had communicated from the *Omaha*.

Reluctantly, the Lieutenant turned to a messenger: "Pass the word to all hands to pick up all documents and valuable instruments and prepare to abandon ship." It would be an orderly procedure this way; the boats could make several trips if necessary.

Machinist Waltrip reported on deck, out of breath. "We've got it, sir. There's one stream of water over the side." He hurried the Lieutenant to

the rail. A four-inch stream was discharging into the sea.

"We've started one pump. Maybe we can save this ship yet," Waltrip said.

The abandonment order was canceled, and Waltrip hurried back to the motor-room.

Chief Electrician Sid Morrison had experimented with the switchboard to find the right circuits, and Machinist Mate Andrew Rausch, of German extraction, had consulted a German-English dictionary found aboard to line up one bilge pump by trial and error.

While the engineers worked to start the remaining two pumps, diving operations began on main deck. Without even shallow-water diving gear, Shipfitter Frank King lowered himself down a weighted line for an inspection of the hull. Just as he was about to enter the water, the sharp black fin of a shark swerved in close to the ship.

An officer fired his pistol repeatedly into the water to ward off the many sharks sighted during the diving operations. Although the sharks continued to advance—one to a distance of less than fifteen feet from the diver—their fear of bullets fired into the sea prevented King from injury.

Diving gear arrived from the *Omaha*, and Carpenter Alton relieved King; but the inspection offered no results in more than an hour of diving, and was discontinued.

At two minutes before noon, the *Odenwald* heaved over from its starboard side, passed even keel and plunged to six degrees port list.

In the motor-room, the movement of tons of water from one side of the ship to the other was accompanied by the pounding sound of rushing water beneath the floor-plates; without their knowing what was happening, men were thrown off balance and sent skidding across the greasy floor-plates.

The sweat forming on the bulkhead between the motor-room and Number Four cargo hold marked fourteen feet of sea water in the hold.

Lieutenant Carmichael made several trips to the motor-room, but it was apparent the battle was being lost.

The master of the *Odenwald* had declared, "This ship will list first to starboard and then to port, and then it will sink."

It was on the port list now. How much longer would it stay afloat?

The *Odenwald*, the lieutenant had discovered, carried an extremely valuable cargo which would be lost—four thousand tons of raw baled rubber, and sizable quantities of brass, copper, tungsten, raw wool and even peanuts. Moreover, there were four thousand Goodrich truck tires aboard, complete with tubes and liners.

But the responsibility for his men weighed heavily upon the Lieutenant

and again he considered abandoning ship.

Then Carpenter Alton came forward with an idea some of the engineers had concocted: The manhole plates in the bulkhead could be backed off slowly, allowing a controllable amount of water to flow from the cargo hold into the motor-room. Two bilge pumps and a ballast pump could expel the water from the motor-room, whereas only one pump could be put into operation expelling water from the cargo hold.

The plan was tried, and soon afterward the pumps commenced discharging water in six streams.

To Lieutenant Carmichael, leaning over the side to watch the flow, the ship seemed to steady and settle down almost immediately.

With the problem of damage control nearly solved, the engineers turned their attention to starting the Diesel motors.

Chief Leslie Shoemaker, the only man from the *Somers* aboard the *Odenwald*, supplemented Chief Earl Gerald's knowledge of Diesels, and throughout the afternoon three German engineers were called back to the *Odenwald* in the hope they might be persuaded to help start the main engines.

The first was Chief Engineer Wilhelm Schroder, who was escorted to the motor-room with a seaman from the *Omaha* as interpreter. As each command was translated for the German, he answered with the Nazi salute and shouted: "Heil Hitler!" He was considered a diverting nuisance, and was sent back to the *Omaha*.

Electrician Walter Schroder arrived sometime later. Making a pretense at starting one of the two main engines, he purposefully neglected to make a necessary adjustment. His German comrades later credited him with a minor degree of sabotage.

By four o'clock in the afternoon the engineers of the salvage detail had discovered the main principle for starting the motors, and were about to hit upon the remaining detail shortly.

THEN Second Engineer Wilhelm Seidl descended into the motor-room. Scant attention was paid to the pudgy-faced, heavy-jowled little man, and little was expected of him. For over an hour Seidl was detained there to watch the engineers at work, and then occurred a casual event which resulted in solving the problem.

One of the engineers, cranking the starboard engine, saw Seidl quickly whirl his hand in the air. That was all. The gesticulation was purely involuntary and instinctive, at watching familiar machinery being mishandled.

No further explanation was given; but to the engineer, it meant that he had been cranking too slowly. On



King lowered himself down a line . . . although the sharks continued to advance.

the next attempt, the motor started, caught, and then slowly built up speed.

The time was two minutes after sunset, at 5:40 P.M.

Eleven days later, on November 17, the *Odenwald* arrived in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the *Omaha* and the *Somers*.

The 2,757 miles to San Juan had not been navigated without incident. When first under way, the *Odenwald* had set course for St. Paul's Rocks,

sixty miles away, that the ship might be beached rather than founder at sea.

There were still many feet of water in the cargo hold. The damage could not be repaired or inspected under way, and the three pumps were kept running the entire trip.

After several days of cruising, a third time bomb, unexploded, was found in the shaft alley. Its electrical switch was dismantled, but the bomb was left in its place for the journey into port.

The *Omaha* lost but later regained fuel suction as a result of the low supply. The two warships had cruised three thousand miles without refueling when the *Odenwald* was sighted.

The course was changed toward Brazil, where the equatorial current and the brisk trade winds, coming from behind the three vessels, would aid in conserving fuel. The *Somers* stopped to rig a sail, which saved an estimated five gallons of fuel an hour.

The two warships replenished at Trinidad, then joined the *Odenwald* for the final leg to San Juan.

Captain Chandler made known to the crew his belief that a salvage award might be granted in the *Odenwald* case; and on the day the three ships reached San Juan, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox filed the claim through the Department of Justice. He was backed with the enthusiastic approval of a great Navy admiral, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

THE salvage claim could not have been filed on behalf of the Navy without official sanction of the United States Government. The last salvage award granted to the Navy occurred in 1839, when personnel of the United States Navy brig *Washington* filed and won claims for taking over the Spanish slave-ship *Amistad*. Off the coast of Cuba, the slaves had revolted and killed the captain. Two Spaniards, whose lives were spared on the promise that they steer the ship for Africa, deceived their captors and headed for the United States, where the *Washington* found them off Long Island on August 28, 1839.

Since then, the Navy had rendered salvage assistance many times, and in some cases Navy personnel have benefited indirectly. In 1942 the salvage of the Argentine vessel *Victoria*, for instance, prompted the Argentine owners to give twenty thousand dollars to the Navy Relief Society, although the personnel of the U.S.S. *Owl* and U.S.S. *Sagamore*, who rendered the assistance, were not remunerated directly.

The trial to fix the amount of the award for the *Odenwald* salvage was delayed by the war. Captain Loers' message to Berlin that the *Odenwald* was intercepted sent the Foreign Minister scurrying to Adolf Hitler for a special conference, in which they regretfully decided that flying an American flag was a violation of international law and that no formal protest could be filed.

Der Fuehrer never forgot the incident, however, and listed as one of Germany's six reasons for declaring war against the United States was the interception and salvage of the *Odenwald*.

The day before Germany declared war, their embassy in Washington, D. C., called in Arnold Whitman

Knauth, one of America's most eminent maritime lawyers, to represent the Hamburg-American Lines, owners of the *Odenwald*, in the pending salvage case.

In 1942, the *Odenwald* was requisitioned by the United States under the Idle Foreign Vessels Act. The valuable cargo was sold to the War Production Board for the eventual use in manufactured products by the American forces, and the vessel went to the War Shipping Board. Repaired and renamed as the M.S. *Blenheim*, the vessel sailed under Panamanian registry, carrying cargo for the Allies throughout the war.

The trial finally opened in April of this year in the United States District Court in San Juan, with Federal Judge Robert H. Cooper hearing his last case before retirement.

Opposed to Knauth as the champion of the Navy's claim was a young and forceful attorney named Thomas McGovern, who was detailed to the case by the Department of Justice. Mc-



One of the engineers saw Seidl quickly whirl his hand in the air. That was all.

Govern surprised the opposition by producing a German Naval chart, taken from official captured documents, which showed there were three submarines within sixty miles of where the three ships lay dead in the water awaiting the efforts to salvage the German vessel.

This disclosure emphasized the extreme danger to all men aboard the two warships, as well as those aboard the *Odenwald*, and played an important part in the final decision of the court.

With the trial ended, Judge Cooper took many days to study the evidence. On April 30, his opinion was published:

To the sixty-seven members of the boarding and salvage party, three thousand dollars each.

To each member of the crews of the *Omaha* and the *Somers* who were not aboard the *Odenwald*, two months' pay and allowances, amounting to a total of \$124,211.66.

To the United States for expenses of the salvage, \$42,212.40.

To the United States, as owners of the *Omaha* and the *Somers*, thirty thousand dollars.

The remainder of the \$2,360,000, the value of the *Odenwald* and its cargo, was decreed to the Alien Property Custodian for the payment of German debts to American creditors. . . .

The outcome would have delighted the skipper. Advanced to rear admiral during the war, he commanded a division of cruisers during the pre-invasion bombardment of Lingayen Gulf. Three days before the invasion, a Japanese suicide plane cascaded out of the skies into the bridge of his flagship.

Before Rear Admiral Chandler died from severe burns the next day, he addressed some of his last words to a newspaper man: "We have a price to pay for big gains. My grandfather was a Secretary of the Navy; my father was an admiral. I had their traditions."

Part of his tradition had been a keen personal regard for the men who served under him. He had been the first to foresee the possibility that the Navy men who had flouted the extraordinary hazards and the unusual circumstances surrounding the *Odenwald* salvage might be rewarded for the first time since more than a century ago.

The case is by no means ended. Almost as soon as Judge Cooper's decision was announced, Attorney Knauth filed an appeal, and another trial will be held in the United States Court of Appeals in Boston in the near future.

If the Appellate Court upholds the decision, the *Odenwald* case conceivably might go to the Supreme Court—just as did its historic predecessor, the *Amistad* case.



A young man's search for the father he has never seen comes to its strange climax.

The Long Quest

by JOHN RANDOLPH PHILLIPS

I SAID it first the year I was fifteen. But Mother brushed my statement aside, the way you brush crumbs from a table when you don't care if they fall on the floor. I said it again the next year, and the year after that, when I was seventeen.

"This summer," I said, "I am going to look for my father."

Mother trembled. But before she could speak, my stepfather Ben Lanning said: "Why not, George?" He gazed steadily across the table at my mother. "Why not, Norah?"

"Oh, it's preposterous!" Mother cried.

"But it's what he wants to do," Ben told her. He was a tall, quiet, handsome man with a way of saying things that left no doubt as to his sincerity.

"It's preposterous, I tell you! He's—he's still just a baby."

"A six-foot baby," Ben observed.

Mother began to cry. Not violently, but in that helpless, pathetic, soundless way she had. Tears streamed down her lovely, little-girl cheeks and her eyes were two blue pools of sadness. It was the kind of subdued grief that must always have won its battle with my father. But Ben Lanning was a different man.

"Norah!" he said.

She stopped crying instantly, dried her eyes, sat gazing at us. "You—you've both turned against me."

"Ah, now, Norah," Ben said fondly. Then to me: "Come in the living-room, George."

He shut the door behind us, waved me to a seat. But he himself remained standing. Or rather he walked up and down, taking short, nervous puffs from his cigarette.

"I never meddled after your mother and I were married," he said finally. "Never asked questions. So I'm more

or less in the dark as to just how much you know about your father."

"I know that he gave Mother all his property and money and just walked out, before I was born."

"There's a point," Ben said quickly. "When he walked out he didn't know that—well, that you were on the way. Norah didn't know it herself then. That makes a difference, doesn't it?"

He walked up and down the room.

"Your mother and father made a mistake, that's all. Lang Gaffney was my best friend. Once we spent a couple of years bumming around the West together. Seeing the country, learning there was more to the United States than this little river town down South. Doing fool things, and being sorry, and then doing them all over again. Being young together, George, just being young together."

He threw his cigarette into the empty fireplace.

"Then I persuaded Lang it was time to settle down and make something of ourselves. So we came back here—and there was a new girl in town. Ah! Little Norah Embree. We fell in love with her, but I never had a chance. Lang married her before either of them knew anything more about the other than, probably, that they both liked chocolate ice-cream.

"Well, Lang found out in short order that he had married a very proper person. Your mother is just that, George. So am I—now. Norah and I observe the same proprieties, and we've always been happy together.

"Yes, Lang found out something—and so did Norah. It wasn't long until she knew she had married a restless man, an impetuous, very sensitive, and completely unpredictable man. She made him miserable, and I guess he exasperated her to the limit. Dear, proper Norah! For one instance, she thought it was bad enough for him to fish with the shanty people down by the river; but what really burned her up was when he would stop off at one of the shanties and eat supper. She—"

"You fish with the shanty folks, Ben," I interrupted.

"One of my few improprieties," he replied, with some sarcasm. "Norah and I just came to an understanding about it. If you've noticed, your mother seldom cries twice about the same thing." A soft smile touched his face and lingered. "Norah is a very wonderful person, George. She is the woman for me—and I am the man for her."

"Yes," I said. "Yes."

"This is it, George. Your father just stopped loving your mother. It wasn't his fault, or hers, either. Lang simply realized that he no longer loved her, and—and he was honest enough to do something about it."

The door opened, and Mother came in. Ben said: "Will you please wait outside, Norah?" She went out. "Did he ever—does he even know about me?"

"I wired him," said Ben, "the day after you were born. I knew where he was then. He came home. He saw you. But Norah wouldn't see him. I think it was probably the wisest decision she ever made. He left next day." Ben struck his hands together. "There it is, George. You still want to find him?"

"Yes," I said.

Ben nodded. "The looking will be fun. The looking will be adven-

ture—even if you never find him. It's what Lang and I would have done at your age. Before I became proper." Suddenly he was businesslike, the way he was in his office. "Now, about expenses. As you know, after you were born, Norah put in your name all the money he left her. I'd suggest you take three hundred dollars in travelers' checks. If you run short you can wire me where to send you more. Where are you going first?"

"I—I thought you might tell me where, Ben."

He smiled. "Go to Ollie Chandler in Fort Worth. Lang always liked Fort Worth and he liked Ollie Chandler. Ollie may know where he is. This used to be Ollie's address."

MOTHER and Ben took me to the station. Mother cried some, until Ben put his hand on her shoulder. Then, drying her eyes in that quick way she had, she began telling me I must write every day. There were a lot of things I must do: Keep to myself, avoid strangers, lock my door at night, have my linen laundered regularly at some respectable place, write every day.

I didn't write home every day, and I didn't find my father. At Fort Worth Ollie Chandler, fat and lazy and thoroughly lovable, hadn't seen Lang Gaffney in years. But he sent me to a man in San Antonio and this man sent me to a man in Denver and this third man was dead. No, his widow said, she couldn't remember any Lang Gaffney, but she gave me a list of her late husband's friends.

"Gaffney?" said one of them. "Oh, sure. Remember him like my own brother. But it's several years back, kid. You might try Stokes Bantry in Cheyenne. He knows everybody."

Mr. Bantry said: "Sure! So you're his kid? Sure! Well, I ain't seen him for ten or twelve years. But you spend the night with us, son. My old lady cooks a mean steak."

I remember those people. Those people who were nice to me, in that genuine, heart-warming Western way. I remember train stops and bus stops and towns in the mountains and



Mr. Bantry said: "So you're his kid? Well, I ain't seen him for ten or twelve years."

towns on the plains. I remember that all at once summer was gone and it was September and that I had to be going back to school.

Mother alone met me at the station. She was tremulous, excited, fluttery, and lovelier than ever. As we walked to the car, she held my arm possessively. She was a beautiful woman, and she was my mother, and I loved her.

"Is it good to be home, George?"

"You bet!"

"Did—did you find him, George?"

"No," I said.

"Tell me about it."

"You bet—some time."

"George," she said, "will you please stop saying, 'you bet?'" Then she added: "Now you're home again, I'm glad you went. You've got it out of your system now."

Dinner that night was something to remember. The table was overloaded with my favorite dishes. Mother was radiant, the two little girls who were my half-sisters sat bug-eyed in the traveler's presence and Ben Lanning talked with me as one man to another.

"You're going again, aren't you?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," I said, "next summer."

He shouldn't have asked that question, and I shouldn't have answered it so firmly. The occasion was suddenly spoiled. Mother fell silent; her chin quivered; her eyes clouded over; and a withdrawn expression settled on her face. Ben looked at her with tender regret.

LATER, when he and I were alone in the living-room, Ben said angrily: "Why do I have to be such a fool sometimes? Not that I'm defending her. But she's a very sensitive woman, who can't help resenting— Oh, hell, she feels you've grown away from her, that finding your father is the most important thing in life to you—more important even than she is. As a man, I side with you. As her husband, my sympathies are entirely with her. Well, you'll be going back next summer. The looking will be fun again."

Suddenly I felt there was something Ben Lanning had to know. I told him firmly: "It isn't the fun, Ben, and it isn't the adventure. It's just that I have to find my father, know him, see what he's like. I'll—I'll never feel complete my own self until I know my father. There'll always be something lacking. Like a clock without hands. Like a book with a blank chapter."

Ben nodded, though I doubt if even he fully understood. Then he went out and I heard him talking with my mother in the next room. Presently Mother came in and sat beside me. She was gay again and her soft, slim

*No, the widow said,
she couldn't remember
any Lang Gaffney.*



hands caressed mine, and she asked me to tell her of the sights that I had seen on my trip, and the things that I had done. . . .

The following summer was much like the one before. People were kind to me, sympathetic, brimming with the desire to help me, apologetic when they could offer no information of worth. Summer was dying when I met a man named Jones Highsmith. He was a construction engineer and he had known my father years before.

"George," he said, "I travel over the whole West. Canada, too. I've

got a lot of contacts. I'll do my best for you, and I'll let you know."

Neither Ben nor I spoiled my homecoming that time. Again Mother honored me with one of her remarkable dinners. Again the little girls eyed me with awe. After dinner we went into the parlor and Mother played the piano while Ben and I sang the old songs that, I hope, will forever be a part of the South: "My Old Kentucky Home," "Swanee River," and half a dozen others.

That night Mother tucked me into bed and I could not help knowing

All the luck in the world, dear—and please, George, be wary of strangers.

She might just as well have asked me to be wary of religion, of love, of life itself. But I still have that note.

THAT Saskatchewan town was no different from a hundred little towns I had seen in the Northwest. A very broad, unpaved main street lined with small business establishments. The inevitable gas stations, the liquor store, the postoffice, the drug store, the butcher shop, grocery stores, one general store, and the Buckingham Hotel.

Leaving the bus, I entered the postoffice. "Do you know a Mr. Lang Gaffney?"

The man smiled. "Everybody knows Lang Gaffney, son."

"Can you tell me where to find him?"

"He was in here not fifteen minutes ago. Comes in every day about this time on the odd chance that he'll pick up some mail. Seldom does, though. You'll find him now sitting in the lobby of the Buckingham Hotel."

The lobby of the Buckingham was deserted save for two men lounging comfortably by a window. One of these men, the gaunt, grizzled old fellow in the sunset of his days, could not be my father. The other man would be tall when he stood up. He had blue eyes like mine and dark, wavy hair like mine, though his was gray at the temples. He had a gentle, handsome face and a smile on his lips.

"Are you Mr. Lang Gaffney?"

He stared at me. I saw his long-fingered hands open and shut. Color flashed back and forth in his brown cheeks. Incredulity trembled in his eyes. He got instantly to his feet, and he was as tall as I, though not quite as heavy.

"Excuse me, Jeff," he said.

"So long, Lang," said the other man, and just the way he said it made me know he was devoted to my father.

We walked in silence to the street. At the side of a pick-up truck my father halted. He stared at me again, then he put out his hand and I felt the grip of his powerful fingers.

"Hello, George," he said, in a quiet yet vibrant voice.

"You—you knew me!"

"The minute I laid eyes on you. Why, you're"—there was sudden ringing pride in his voice—"why, you're the image of me when I was your age. Nineteen, isn't it, George?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"You've been looking for me?"

"The last two summers, sir."

"Why?"

"Because—" I could go no further. Suddenly I was afraid that I was going to cry.



But one morning my father said: "Let's go—before we get too much of it."

that she was wishing I had never grown up, wishing that tucking me into bed was still a necessity and not a gesture. . . .

I entered the University that fall, made the freshman football team at tackle, did reasonably well in my studies, and went home every weekend. Never had I felt so close to my family. Still, I knew—and I suppose they did, too—that when summer came again I would once more ride forth on my long quest.

Fall and winter passed. Spring came overnight. In May of that year I received a letter from Jones Highsmith. He had had luck, he said; good news for me. My father was living near a little town in Saskatchewan.

I told no one of that letter, not even Ben. I locked it away at the bottom of my trunk. There was no need to take it out again; I had memorized every word of it.

June came. I did not stay over at the University for Finals, did not linger to celebrate my coming of age as a sophomore. But a badgered sense of duty made me tarry at home a full week. Then one day Mother asked me to walk with her in her flower garden. Her arm linked with mine, fragile, tender, possessive, she walked beside me and chatted of this and that and of nothing in particular.

Then, without warning, she was dead serious, and she said: "You're going tomorrow, aren't you?"

"How did you know?"

"I just knew. And this time I won't cry, I won't shed one single, solitary tear. This time, you see, I'm glad. I hope you find him. Give him my love. Ben has told me what finding him means to you. But—don't wait till tomorrow. Go tonight. Go now."

On the train that night I found a note tucked inside my toilet kit:

But he saved me. He took the play away from me, in a way that I was later to learn was characteristic of him. He said quickly: "Just wanted to see what the old man looked like, eh? Well?"

We grinned at each other. I managed to capture something of his spirit. I said: "Well, I guess you'll do."

My father laughed outright and then drawled: "Pardner, you stack up as the kind of man I like to have around me. Pitch your gear in the back of the truck and we'll get goin'."

I parked my suitcase and we climbed into the pick-up.

"Want to drive?" my father asked. "No, you drive."

We rolled west out of town, crossing the tracks of the Canadian Pacific, passing the last house. On either side of the sandy road the prairie stretched away, dotted here and there with clumps of bush. Gophers sat up on their hindlegs and watched us come, and then scuttled aside.

"Funny little devils," said Lang Gaffney. "Wonder what gophers talk about. Did you ever consider what Mrs. Gopher says to Mr. Gopher when he forgets to mail a letter for her?"

"She probably says: 'Oh, that man!'"

My father chuckled. "Jackrabbits I understand, and coyotes. But I'll be blessed if I can figure out what makes a gopher tick. Prairie chicken and grouse and ducks, I understand them too. Even wild geese, after a fashion. But gophers have always had me whipped."

"I'll study them and make a report to you."

"No," he said thoughtfully. "I'd just as soon you didn't. Does a man good to have one thing he can't figure out."

WE turned off the highway ten miles from town, and I got out to open one of the few wooden gates I ever saw in that barbed-wire country of Saskatchewan. A quarter of a mile down the ranch road, we came to a white frame two-story house settled comfortably upon a treeless knoll. A stout woman, as busy as a fat sparrow, was sweeping the front porch. Driving around the house, my father parked the pick-up but made no move to get out.

"I came here ten years ago," he said finally. "Had enough cash saved from here and there to buy a quarter section. I've got a whole section now and I'm a naturalized citizen. I always did want to be a Canadian." A frown creased his forehead. "Funny the twists and turns a man's life will take. . . . How are the folks at home?"

"Fine," I said. "M-mother sent you her love."

"I thank you," he said simply.

We sat a long while there in the cab of the pick-up truck, and I learned about his life here. His principal business was wheat, but he also raised cattle and horses and hogs and turkeys. The woman I had seen was Mrs. Prescott. Her husband was my father's foreman. Mrs. Prescott kept house for my father, and Mr. Prescott and the two Indian boys who worked on the place.

There was genuine fondness in my father's voice when he referred to the Prescotts. "She weighs two hundred and five in her underwear; and Pres, with his hair sopping wet, won't go an ounce over one twenty-eight. Like a hummingbird and a cabbage." His chuckle became a riotous laugh. "By the way, you never saw such a shock of hair on a man's head as you'll see on Pres's. Here he comes now."

Mr. Prescott was dressed like my father. Wide hat, red-and-black-checked shirt, and blue jeans. My father said, "Pres, this is my son from the States," and Pres gaped and then shook my hand. A moment later he removed his hat the better to mop his steaming forehead, and I got the start of my life. There was no shock of hair: there was no hair at all; he was as bald as a peeled onion.

My father cut his eye at me. Leaning close, he whispered: "Oh, shucks, I must have been thinking about some other fellow."

We went into the house. From the depths of her ample being Mrs. Prescott cried: "Lord God, Lang Gaffney, you never told me you had a son!"

"I never told you I was *Peter Rabbit*, either."

"Did you get him the right way, Lang?" she demanded.

"It was all very legal and honorable, Mrs. Pres," he told her. But for a moment shadows gathered in his fine blue eyes.

I looked around me. It was a cluttered house. Too many chairs, a table too big for the dining-room, a sprawling kitchen with men's shirts and pants hanging by the stove to dry, a hall littered with masculine gear—rifles and shotguns, a pair of boots, a saddle, and some odds and ends of fishing tackle.

My father's gaze followed mine. He chuckled. "Mrs. Pres, you've let your house get into a terrible mess."

"Yak!" she shouted. "When a woman's life-work is cooking for four he-wolves, what time has she got to tidy up? I'd thank you, one and all, to clean up your trash just once. Yak! One time in my life I'd like to see this house looking as neat and sweet as my old mother's house back in Ontario."

To my amazement, there were sudden tears in her eyes. My father went to her instantly, slid his arm around her ponderous waist.

"There now, Mrs. Pres, we're a bunch of hyenas, and truth and decency are not in us. But you, why, you've got stars in your crown. Big old shining stars with their Sunday clothes on."

The tears evaporated. "I swear, Lang, you could twist the tail of the devil himself and make him like it."

My father grinned. Mr. Prescott chuckled, then walked on the tiny feet at the ends of his bandy legs to the kitchen sink and began washing.

The two Indians came in just then. They were youngsters of my own age. My father introduced them. The tall one was named John Skimmer. The short one's real name I never learned: he was called simply Hard-times, and he did not seem to mind.

PRESENTLY my father took me upstairs to the room that was to be mine. Climbing the steps, I looked down into the hall. Yes, it was a cluttered house, but you could leave it and come back a thousand years later and you would say to yourself: "Well, here people lived."

We sat down to supper, my father and I, the Prescotts, and the two Indians. I had never tasted such delicious steak. His own beef, my father told me proudly, and John Skimmer and Hard-times nodded vigorously, and they were proud too.

"Mrs. Pres," my father said, "pour this boy another glass of that Saskatchewan River water. George, once a man has had a drink from the Saskatchewan, he always comes back."

"I'll always come back, anyway."

"Yes," he said, looking me squarely in the eyes, "yes, you'll always come back." And for a moment then the Prescotts and the Indians did not exist, and there was no one in that room except my father and myself. . . .

Next morning, mounted on a saddle-wise sorrel mare, I rode beside my father over his entire section. We stopped where the men were working and you could tell that my father was proud of the work they were doing. We rode on and he seemed to expand out here in the open. You could tell that he reveled in this, his land, in the limitless sky above him, in the clean, sweet smell of the prairie, in the vagrant wind blowing from the coulees along the Saskatchewan.

"Tell you what!" he cried suddenly.

"You and I'll go on a fishing trip. Like the idea, eh? We'll load the pick-up, and go and stay as long as we want to. A month, maybe six weeks."

"Where'll we go?"

"There's always Cold Lake, and there's the Meadow Lake country. No! We'll make a real trip of it: We'll go to the Rockies!"

"The Rockies?" I gasped.

"Why not? This is a big country, son, and people travel big." After a

moment he added thoughtfully: "It's a young man's country too, George, and I'm still a young man, thank God!"

"You—you're fifty-one, aren't you?"
"I'm fifty-one—in years. But years don't count." . . .

We left the ranch by starlight and rolled westward. We went rattly-bump and bumpity-rattle through Saskatchewan and across Alberta and into the Rockies. At night we slept in some poplar clump along the highway. The afternoon we reached the high Rockies, the rest of the world seemed to drop away from us.

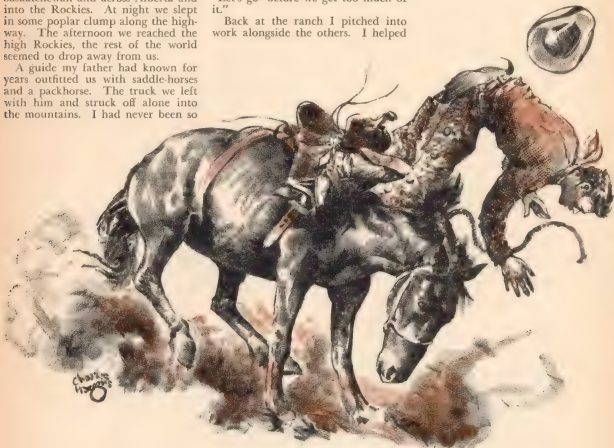
A guide my father had known for years outfitted us with saddle-horses and a packhorse. The truck we left with him and struck off alone into the mountains. I had never been so

We stayed a month in the Rockies. We camped beside boisterous mountain streams. We fished and loafed, loafed and fished. We saw elk and moose and deer and bear, and once in the far distance, a giant timber wolf. At night we slept under the stars. Time meant nothing to us, nor did the world outside.

But one morning my father said: "Let's go—before we get too much of it."

Back at the ranch I pitched into work alongside the others. I helped

thoughts, then one of us would say something and the other would respond, and we'd talk rapidly for a while and then fall silent again. My father said once that he liked a man with whom he could be silent, and I felt the same way. We talked football and fishing and books and people



For once my father was caught unprepared. He fought to regain his seat, then pitched headlong.

excited in all my life except for that time in the lobby of the Buckingham Hotel.

Now and then my father's horse bucked. But he was no match for my father. Both horse and rider, though, seemed to get a kick out of it and my father's laughter rang wild and free in the stillness of the mountains. I think yet that he was the handsomest man on a horse I ever saw.

"This old coyote-bait thinks he can buck," he told me. "But he's a little dog in the high weeds compared to some I've flung a leg over." He leaned forward and stroked the horse's neck. "I've been a pretty fair rider in my time. I guess my riding's the only thing I ever bragged about."

mend fence; I helped cut the wild hay, the prairie wool. When the wheat was ready, we began combining. I drove a tractor, and I could ride that tractor better than I could a horse. Still, when I wanted to ride horseback now, Pres no longer bothered to pick out the gentlest mount on the ranch for me.

We were dog-tired at night after the day in the field. The Prescotts, John Skimmer, and Hard-times went to bed shortly after supper. But my father and I would sit on the porch until the chill drove us inside. I remember those nights vividly; they were almost as good as the nights and days we had spent in the mountains.

Sometimes we were silent for long stretches, each buried in his own

and even politics a little. It was good talk, complete and satisfying.

But finally harvest was over and another summer had ended. On a Monday night Lang Gaffney and I sat on the porch and I remarked reluctantly that I would be leaving Wednesday. The University, I mentioned, opened in two weeks.

My father nodded. "You'll be coming back, son?"

"Next June," I told him.

"George," he said quietly, "when I was in town the other day, I made my will. This ranch will be yours when I die. Hell, it's yours now, as far as that goes."

"Thank you, sir," I said, and could say no more.

"You haven't written home much."

"Only three times," I admitted. "Twice from here and once from Edmonton, the night we spent there."

Pres came out to the porch. He and the Indians had been trying to gentle a couple of unbroken horses that afternoon. Now Pres said that the little sorrel was coming along nicely but that the bay was a mean and vicious son of the devil himself.

"I'll take a look at him tomorrow," my father said. "Good night, Pres." When Pres had gone, my father said: "Of course you told them you'd found me."

"No, I didn't tell them."

"Why not?"

"I don't know," I said. "I honestly don't know, sir." And I didn't.

"You're too much like me," he said, but did not enlarge upon that statement. "Give your mother and Ben my love—and don't forget next June."

As if I could!

NEXT morning my father and I made a fuss over sorting out his fishing tackle and storing it away for the winter. I guess we both had to be doing something with our hands. But Pres interrupted our operations. "Lang, we can't do a thing with that bay. He threw John twice and Hard-times twice, and he threw me once."

"Served you right for getting on him at your age. All right, Pres, we'll sell him."

"Let me try him," I said suddenly. They stared at me, and there was admiration in both pairs of eyes. But my father shook his head. "Why not?" I persisted.

Color flashed in my father's face, and his eyes were very bright. I think that moment was a treasure to him. I think that then he saw himself in me.

The bay was a bony, rangy little horse with the very devil in his eye. Pres and the Indians saddled him and held him. I mounted. They let him go. And then it was as if I were straddling a thunderbolt. The bay gave three prodigious bucks. He was all alone the third time. I parted company with him at the second buck.

I landed on my left ear and shoulder, but scrambled to my feet before my father could reach me. I wanted to try again—my father shook his head.

"You were too stiff and tight and tense. You have got to make yourself a part of the horse. Pres, catch him up again."

Pres guessed my father's intentions. "No!" he shouted. "Lang, you're five years older than you were the last time you broke a mean horse."

"I only want to show the boy how it should be done," my father said. "Catch up the horse, Pres."

So Pres and the Indians recaptured the bay, adjusted the saddle, and held



Illustrated by
Charles Hargens

the horse while my father swung into the saddle. Then they let him go, and there began the greatest spectacle I have ever witnessed. My father was a part of the horse. I saw now what he meant. The bay tried every trick of his vicious trade, except falling backward, and my father sat him not only with ease but with unbelievable grace.

Round and round the corral went the frantic brute until at last his jumps became fewer and fewer and less violent. I was breathing hard, and beside me Pres was breathing hard too. When finally the bay settled into a crazy, zigzag trot, I gave one great shout at the top of my lungs.

My father's laugh rang the way it had back yonder in the mountains. He was magnificent. I shouted again. My father was the greatest rider in the world.

And then Pres screamed: "Look out!"

With the last of his energy, the bay exploded, and for once my father was caught unprepared. He shot halfway out of the saddle, fought to regain his seat, and then pitched headlong and violently over the horse's head.

I can still hear the awful clatter of the bay's hoofs as he raced to freedom. I was down on my knees now. My father's head was twisted, his neck broken. For one moment recognition glimmered in his eyes; then all expression left them. But curiously, there lingered on his lips at least half

of his triumphant smile. I remember that. I have to remember it.

BEN and my mother were alone in the library. I had not told them of the time of my arrival. I walked across the room into my mother's arms. I was steady on my feet, and my hands were steady and my face must have been composed. But I clung to her a long while.

"You found him, dear?"

"No," I said. "No, I didn't find him."

"I'll run fetch you a glass of milk."

She skimmed out of the room. Ben Lanning looked at me. "So you did find him?"

"Yes."

"How was it, George? How is he? Is he happy?"

"I think so, Ben."

"Tell me about it, George."

"Some other time, Ben, please."

I walked over to a window. Some day I would tell him. Some day I would tell Ben Lanning and my mother. I would tell them all about it, and I would tell them, too, that when college was over for me, I was going home to Saskatchewan. Yes, sometime I would tell them. But that time was not yet.

My mother came back. I took the milk. I was home again, drinking a glass of milk, looking out of a window. Suddenly I heard him say: "Did you ever consider what Mrs. Gopher says to Mr. Gopher when he forgets to mail a letter for her?" And I felt a smile breaking its way along my lips. I think he would have liked that smile.



Fiddling

The soul-shaking saga of a

I felt pretty foolish walking through the crowd with a hammerlock on a girl dressed in tights.

I DIDN'T scarcely ever put a woman in jail; not if I could get out of it. But when you're chief of police, and the City Hall crowd tells you to, you got to do it. But I wouldn't ever put another one in jail with a fiddle. Not if the Judge and the Mayor and the whole City Council told me to. Not even if the woman punched me in the eye as this one did.

The carnival had been in town only three days. I'd been over to give it a squint, but it looked all right to me, so I didn't pay any more attention to it. I was in the Judge's office glancing over his newspaper when the Mayor came in with a silly look on his face. He'd been over to the carnival, he told the Judge, and he'd been short-changed. It was at a concession called the Fiddlin' Dagger Queen, run by some dame. Her gateman had kicked back four dollars and sixty-five cents change on a ten-dollar bill.

The Judge looked at me and says: "Okay, Ebe."

That was the Mayor and the Judge for you. The Mayor never did speak to me direct. He always told the Judge anything, and the Judge would tell me.

I folded the newspaper and laid it on the Judge's desk. I said I'd take care of it right away; I'd go down and close the show. I used to be a wrestler, so I didn't figure I'd have much trouble. . . .

I flashed my badge on the gateman, and walked in the tent. I stood in the crowd and took a good look at this here Fiddlin' Dagger Queen. She was dressed in a little short red-and-yellow skirt and a tiny little jacket trimmed in fur that wouldn't keep a pygmy

warm. And they didn't meet in the middle—not by five or six inches. She was standing in front of a big painted target, as pretty a picture as you ever saw in a two-bit carnival. And she was fiddling "The Gypsy Love Song" while a thin guy with a stringy mustache threw knives at her. When the act was over, I pushed my way through the crowd up toward the front. "Okay, folks," I says, "this is a pinch!" I said it good and loud. "The show's closed!"

The Dagger Queen swung around with her eyes just blazing.

"Why, you hick-town ape!" she says. Before I could put up my dukes, she gave me a shiner in the left eye. The crowd laughed. I was pretty mad. You don't like to put a hammerlock on a lady, but I had to, because she had both fists going. The thin guy with the stringy mustache started yelling, "Hey, Rubel!" Before I could get to the door with the Dagger Queen, half a dozen roustabouts were in the way with their sleeves rolled up. I thought there was going to be trouble. But then the Queen relaxed a little in my grip and says: "That's all right, boys, I'll go with this ape. I might be staying awhile." I could have bet her she was right about staying awhile, because my eye was getting puffed up, but I didn't say a thing.

I felt pretty foolish walking out through the crowd with a hammerlock on a girl dressed in tights, but I knew enough not to let go a minute. She smiled very sweet at all the people, and nodded her head just like she was leading a parade, and everybody laughed. I knew who it was they were laughing at, and it wasn't her.

I drove right over to the city hall and marched the Dagger Queen into the Judge's office, which is really only a corner of the police station walled off. The Judge slipped the comic book he was reading under a newspaper on his desk, and looked pretty pleased at the kind of a customer I brought him. He noticed my shiner, which was beginning to turn purple, and he laughed.

Then the Dagger Queen says: "Okay, Grandpa, let's get this show on the road!" The Judge stopped laughing quick. He took off his glasses and glared at her like an owl. He blew his nose and said, "The court is now open," and I knew she'd better not call him Grandpa again with the court in session, even if there wasn't anybody but me and the Judge and the prisoner there.

"Guilty or not guilty?" He barked it out, staring straight at the Dagger Queen.

"Listen!" the Queen said. "You'd better tell me what I'm guilty or not guilty of, Grandpa."

The Judge was growing red now right up to the top of his bald head, but he didn't explode. He just gathered all his dignity together:

"Young woman, I want to tell you calling a judge 'Grandpa' or any other uncomplimentary epithet is contempt of court and punishable by fine or imprisonment." He paused for the weight of that to take effect and then he added: "Ten dollars or five days!"

The Dagger Queen just looked at him and said: "I don't like standing here naked. I would like something to put on."

THE Judge ran his hand over his head. He raised his voice. "Will you pay ten dollars," he says, "or take five days?"

"I haven't got ten dollars," she said. "I'll take the five days, Grandpa."

The Judge had his glasses in his hand. He must have thought they were a gavel, because he brought them down on the desk:

"Ten dollars or five days more!" he yelled. Then he looked at his rims without any glass in them, and his voice dropped down very level. He spaced the words, and he bit them off like they hurt him.

Dagger Queen

cop and a carnival actress by Bill Brown

"You're charged with resisting and assaulting an officer," he said. "Plead guilty, and you'll get ten days. With the ten you already got for contempt of court, that'll make twenty."

The Dagger Queen shook some of the canary-colored hair back under her jeweled headpiece. Then she looked up with just a ghost of a smile, and I think she winked at me, but I'm not sure.

"I want to tell you and the Ape here, that you won't keep me in this lousy jail for twenty days!" she said.

The Dagger Queen was smart enough to plead guilty. I wasn't sorry about the whole thing. It wouldn't be bad having a canary like that in the cage to take care of, I thought. A little later I wasn't so sure.

The Queen walked into the women's cell and glanced around just like she was looking over a hotel room. I felt a little nervous. I remembered I hadn't cleaned up the place since we had Lizzie White and her girls in for three days. She picked up the two old gray blankets, and I could tell by the way she drew her head back that they smelled sour. She looked at the washbasin, and - it was kind of smeary. Most people are scared when they get

put in jail and don't worry about how clean it is. But not her!

The Dagger Queen turned on me, and I got ready to slam the door between us.

"See here, Ape," she says. "This place isn't fit for a cop to sleep in. Who's the janitor?"

I was the janitor. I said so.

"Okay," she says. "I want this place cleaned up. I want it swept, and I want it scrubbed. I want that washbasin to shine. I want clean blankets!"

I wasn't used to being talked to by a prisoner like that, but I didn't like to think of a pretty girl having to sleep between dirty blankets.

I locked the Dagger Queen up in the police station, and then I rustled a couple of new blankets out of the storeroom. I swept the cell out and scrubbed up the wash-basin. I splashed some chlorinated water around so it would smell clean. The place was a little more cheerful. But I shouldn't have felt sorry for her. She only got ten days for socking me, and she just asked for the other ten by calling the Judge "Grandpa."

The next morning when I relieved the night cop, I heard a violin going down in the jail, so I knew somebody had brought the Dagger Queen's gear from the carnival. I opened the wire door at the end of the corridor and went down the iron steps. She must have heard me coming. She started playing "The Prisoner's Song." It sounded kind of pretty the first time she played it, and she put her whole heart and soul into it, just like she was playing for a whole crowd of people.

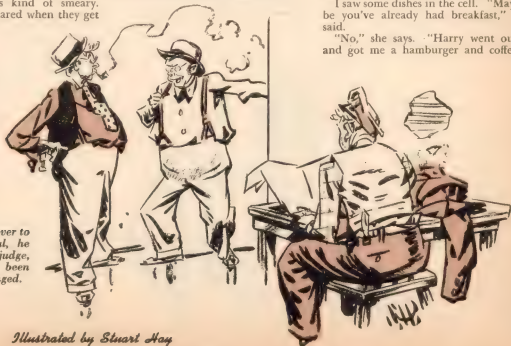
The Dagger Queen's bunk was made up all nice and neat, and she was sitting on it, playing. She pretended like she didn't see me. She looked pretty nice, dressed in blue slacks and a yellow sweater. Her hair was combed, and came clear down to her shoulders. I never saw anybody that had such yellow hair.

She didn't stop playing, so I said: "Hey, miss, do you want some breakfast?"

She looked around with her eyes wide, like she was surprised.

I saw some dishes in the cell. "Maybe you've already had breakfast," I said.

"No," she says. "Harry went out and got me a hamburger and coffee."



He'd been over to the carnival, he told the judge, and he'd been short-changed.

Illustrated by Stuart May

about midnight." Harry was the night cop.

"You're only entitled to three thirty-cent meals a day," I said, but I knew the night cop bought her the stuff out of his own pocket.

"I'll have the first one now," she said, laying down her fiddle. She looked up at me and smiled. "Make it bacon and eggs and rolls and coffee."

I WENT over to Joe's across the street. All he had for thirty cents was a bowl of oatmeal, toast and coffee. So I figured what the heck, it wouldn't hurt me to put a quarter with it and get her the eggs.

The Queen says: "You know, Ape, you're a nice guy. What are you doing as a cop in a little hick town like this?"

I said: "There's lots worse things than being a cop."

I thought she sniffed a little. "You could do better. Maybe in the show business."

"Show business!" I snorted. I slammed the cell door and went upstairs. Show business! I was doing all right. Being chief of police was a good job.

I was still mad when I sat down to type a notice. It was aimed at the rest of the police force, which was only the night cop:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

It is forbidden for any police officer on this force to fraternize with any prisoner in this city jail.

Alonzo Buchanan Ebe, Chief.

But it looked silly, so I tore it up.

The Queen had finished her break-fast by this time. I could hear her down in the cell playing "The Prisoner's Song" again. It would have been all right if she'd played the blamed thing once. But she played it again.

Queen was still at it, still playing "The Prisoner's Song."

The Judge stuck his head out the door and says:

"For Pete's sake, can't you make her stop that racket?"

"Listen, Miss," I told the Queen, "the Judge doesn't like that music. You'd better stop."

She took the violin down from her chin and twisted one of the keys just a little tiny bit.

"You can tell Grandpa," she said, "that I'll stop when he lets me out of here!" She must have put one of the strings out of tune, because when she started to play again that music sort of hurt your wishbone.

I told the Judge what she said, leaving out the "Grandpa."

"Well, take the damn' thing away from her!" he yelled. "Do you think I'm going to listen to that for twenty days?"

I wanted to tell him to go take it away himself. I remembered my sock in the eye. But I told the Dagger Queen the Judge said I would have to take the fiddle away if she didn't quit playing. She stopped with her arm out at the end of a stroke. Her eyes flashed as she said:

"Who's in charge of prisoners in this jail?"

I said I was, because I was the chief of police.

"Then who does that judge think he is, telling you what your prisoners can do?"

I tried to explain that I liked to get along with the Judge, which was kind of hard to do sometimes, and my relations with him weren't going to be any better if I let her keep the fiddle. The Dagger Queen looked at me like she was sorry for me, but she lifted up her bow and started on the same old tune.

I could see the only way to handle the Dagger Queen was to be firm. I said: "Miss, give me that fiddle! Right now!"

The Dagger Queen looked a little surprised. She stopped playing and opened her eyes until they were real wide, and the tears began to come. I took the violin out of her hands and shut the cell door behind me. I felt like a low-down sort of a heel, but I had to do something.

At first the Dagger Queen sobbed low and sad, and for a minute I felt like taking the fiddle back to her. Then she commenced to cry so you could hear it in the station. In a minute she really let go, and it was ten times worse than "The Prisoner's Song." I knew everybody passing on the street could hear the sobs coming up through the sidewalk grating. I didn't like that. It gives the police department a bad name for the public to hear women crying in jail.

The Judge stood the crying for about two hours and a half. Then a traffic case came up for hearing. The racket was so bad he had to discontinue the case until the next day. He said I'd better give the dame back her fiddle.

I could see with half an eye that the Dagger Queen wasn't going to be with us long if this kept up. I thought that might be just as well, considering the ideas she was getting about me quitting my job.

The Judge locked up his office a little early that afternoon. He just glared at me when he came by. I think he blamed me for the whole thing, but it wasn't me that gave her twenty days.

As soon as the Judge left, the Dagger Queen quit fiddling. I went out early and got her supper instead of waiting, for the night cop to do it.

THE Dagger Queen pushed some peas around her plate with a fork and looked up at me.

"You know, Ape," she says, "I been thinking about you. And I'm sorry I hit you in the eye."

I said that was all right. It wasn't the first time I been hit in the eye.

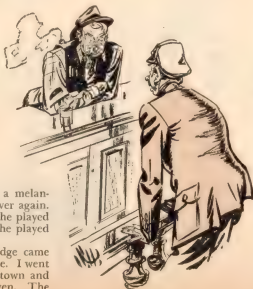
The Queen shoved her plate aside and put her elbows on the steel table. For the first time she looked at me like I was a human being instead of a moron.

"Have you thought any more," she says, "about joining the carnival?"

I said: "You're crazy. You got to be a freak or something to join a carnival."

"Do I look like a freak?" she inquired. I didn't think that needed an answer, so I didn't say anything.

"You know," she went on, "I could find a place for you." She reached out and put her hand on my sleeve. "A big dumb cop that's a wrestler—



"Well, take the damn' thing away from her!" the judge yelled. "Do you think I'm going to listen to that for twenty days?"

Then she wound it up on a melancholy note and started all over again. She played it again. Then she played it again and again. Then she played it a dozen times more.

About ten o'clock the Judge came down and opened up his office. I went out to make the rounds of town and came back about eleven. The

takes on all comers. Put on a demonstration, maybe. How to handle roughnecks. Maybe even how to handle women with a hammerlock." I guess I must have looked embarrassed, because she smiled.

"This is a good job I got," I said, thinking that some day the department would get bigger.

"I don't think it's a very good job," she says. Then she leaned back in her chair and stuck her lower lip out, and blew her nose like the Judge does and pounded the table with her fist. She even made her voice sound like the Judge's voice when she said: "Ebe, I want you to polish the spittoons this morning. And I want you to wash my car. Then the Mayor wants you to take care of his kids this afternoon while his wife goes shopping—" That girl certainly could be an actress in Hollywood.

The Queen leaned forward and took hold of my wrist again and gripped it tight. She was a whole lot stronger than she looked. I could feel those little fingers like handcuffs around my wrist.

"WOULDN'T you like to have your picture painted ten feet high on the canvas strip? With your name under it: 'Chief Ebe, The Wrestling Cop. Demonstrations in Judo and Hara-Kiri.'"

"You mean ju-jitsu," I says.

"Maybe I do. Then there would be the lights. Big spotlights on your picture. You'd stand on the platform dressed in a gold-trimmed robe. And you could see the faces—the hundreds of people in the gay-way all looking at you. And the sound of the barkers—" Her voice trailed off, and her eyes shone like she was seeing it all there on the jail wall.

For a minute I must have been hypnotized. Then I pried her fingers loose from my wrist and said: "No, I'm staying right here!"

Her voice was a little shaky: "A girl needs a strong honest guy like you to look out for her around a carnival."

"There's plenty of guys to look out for you," I said. I thought about the six big roustabouts that showed up when somebody yelled "Hey, Rubel!" I thought about the dagger-thrower with the stringy mustache.

The Dagger Queen looked at me straight for a minute, and I couldn't tell whether she was going to cry or not. I didn't think I could stand it if she did cry, so I got out of there and slammed the door after me.

After I left, the Queen twisted all four strings off key and let the old "Prisoner's Song" rip.

Then the Mayor's office called on the Judge's phone. The Mayor didn't like that racket—not a little bit. There was going to be a council meeting, and that noise *had* to be stopped!



She started playing the "Prisoner's Song"; it sounded kind of pretty the first time she played it.

The Judge gave up. He told me to bring in the Dagger Queen, and his voice sounded tired when he said it.

I unlocked the cell and told her to come along; the Judge wanted to see her. She stood up. She put down her violin on the bed. She said, "About time!" but she didn't sound as happy as I thought she would.

The Judge looked down at the papers on his desk and scribbled a minute. Without looking up he said:

"I've commuted your sentence, to two days. You've served that. You can go."

The Dagger Queen didn't even look at the Judge. She was looking at me. She didn't say anything. She just looked at me like she was waiting for me to say something.

Pretty soon the Judge glanced up. We were just standing there. He blew his nose.

"Let this be a lesson to you," he says to me. "I don't ever want to catch you letting a dame in jail again with a fiddle! Not ever!"

I almost opened my mouth to tell the Judge this whole affair was his fault—his and the Mayor's, and not mine; but the Judge was scowling so I didn't say anything.

Then he turned on the Dagger Queen. She looked no bigger around than my right arm standing there in front of the Judge, with her yellow hair falling down over her small shoulders.

The Judge wagged a finger at her. "I'm telling you now," he said, "if I ever get you or any other of your carnival tramps in this court, you'll wish you never hit this town!"

The Judge shouldn't have said that. He shouldn't have called the Dagger Queen a tramp. I could feel my bristles coming up.

"You won't," I said very quiet. "You won't get anybody in your court unless you go after them yourself—you or the Mayor."

The Judge straightened up a little and stared at me. I heard myself getting louder.

"I'm sick and tired of you telling me how to run my jail, Judge. Understand? You can find somebody else to run it your way, understand? I'm through, understand?"

I knew he didn't understand, because he blinked a couple of times and said: "The Mayor won't like this, Ebe."

"I don't care what the Mayor likes," I yelled. "I'm going to live my own life from now on. I'm going to be a wrestler again. And I'm going to have my own concession in the carnival, and I'll have my picture painted on the canvas strip ten feet high. Maybe bigger. And I won't have you telling me how to run a jail!"

I glanced at the Queen. She was watching me, with her eyes big and round.

The Judge was just sitting there with his mouth open, so I calmed down a little bit.

"And I just been thinking," I said, "that a nice girl like her needs a strong honest guy to look after her around a carnival."

They were trying to fight the Civil War over again in frontier Oregon when the veteran from Missouri took over.

by **WAYNE D. OVERHOLSER**

Illustrated by John Fulton

GRASS had grown again to cover the scars of battle at Shiloh and Gettysburg and Five Forks, but there was nothing that could hide the scars in the hearts of men that strife had made. Even in Oregon where no battle had been fought, bitterness still lay like a motionless evil-smelling pool.

Many who had been admitted Copperheads during the war had moved to other localities and started again among new neighbors; but the Vannings clung sullenly to old Enoch's donation land-claim in the foothills east of Oregon City, brooding and muttering defiance to those who kept alive the memory of their Civil War record.

Although the schoolmaster, Neil Hartley, was new to the Corners, he soon understood the situation. Hank Bonner, the postmaster and storekeeper who had been a Union Leaguer during the war, and a loud-mouthed one at that, stopped at the schoolhouse the first evening after the pupils had gone.

"Everybody in this community but the Vannings was for Lincoln and the Union, Hartley," Bonner said arrogantly. "I understand you came from Missouri. What are your politics, sir?"

Except for the war years, Neil Hartley had taught school since he was sixteen. Tall and ungainly and awkward, he was far from a handsome man, but he had a rare understanding of people, both young and old, and for that reason he was a successful teacher. His eyes, red-rimmed from much reading, fixed on Bonner and mirrored his instinctive dislike for the man. Bonner, small and over-proud and fuzzy-whiskered, was a trouble-stirrer bent on keeping the Civil War alive years after Lee's surrender.

"My politics are my business," Hartley said shortly.

Bonner bristled. "You won't get along if you take that attitude. The Vannings will run you out in a month if you don't have the Unionists' help."

"I didn't have any Vannings in school today."

"It ain't that. They're Rebels. Allus was 'n' allus will be. Old Enoch Vanning was the Copperhead kingpin around here. Three of his boys fit with the Rebels. One of 'em died at Cold Harbor."

"I respect any man who fights for his belief," Hartley said gravely.

He couldn't lick the five of them. But there was one thing the Vannings admired. It might work.



Book-L'arnin' and

Bonner's little eyes narrowed. "All right, Hartley. You're a gone pigeon, and talking tough won't help you."

In Missouri old hatreds were still festering sores, but Hartley had not expected to find the same thing true here. He rose now, and putting his hands palms down on the scarred desktop, leaned across it, his mouth drawn tight across his bony face.

"There has been unnecessary suffering in the South because men like you keep the old fires alive. Every human being, whether his name is Vanning or something else, has a God-given dignity and an intrinsic worth because he is a human being. Good day, sir."

"The Vannings will make you trouble," Bonner cried. "I only wanted—"

"If you think you can embroil me in your neighborhood feuds, you're wrong. Good day, sir."

Bonner left, muttering about Rebel Missourians teaching loyal Oregon children. A sickness crawling through him, Hartley watched Bonner until he had crossed the schoolyard and disappeared into the timber. Hartley had killed men, and he had seen his friends die. Thousands of miles from those battlefields, across the plains and Rockies, across deserts and the Cascades, he had expected to find peace of spirit. He saw now that he would find no peace, until he had fought for it. . . .

The sun was dipping behind the fir tops of the hills when Hartley took the path through the timber to Parson Dailey's house, where he boarded.

"Who are the Vannings?" Hartley asked that night.

"Unreconstructed Rebels," the parson said heavily. "A bad lot. Avoid them as you would the devil. They care only for drinking and fighting."



the Equalizer

"There might be less trouble if their neighbors treated them fairly."

Dailey smiled thinly. "The only way to treat a family of snakes is to bruise their heads under your heel."

"Do they have any children of school age?"

"The youngest boy is eighteen. The Lord help you if he comes to school."

HARTLEY lay awake that night, thinking about the Vannings—wondering. Parson Dailey was no Hank Bonner. Still, it was something less than sense for a feud like this to be hanging over from the war years.

Hartley didn't see any of the Vannings for more than a week. They lived ten miles up the creek, and came to the settlement only when necessity drove them, or old Enoch's corn liquor prodded them into hunting for a fight. But Hartley heard talk from his pupils, so much talk that his curiosity

grew. Everybody who lived within twenty miles of the Corners feared the Vannings; and the rumor spread that the old Union Leaguers would settle the feud bloodily and permanently.

Then old Enoch brought Bud to school. Hartley was hearing little Jane Dailey read, when Enoch and the boy came in. He guessed who they were before old man Vanning opened his mouth.

"You the school-marm?" old Enoch boomed.

Anger stirred in Hartley. If Enoch aimed to start trouble, he was beginning the right way. Hartley said: "That will do, Jane." He moved along the aisle to where Vanning and the sullen boy stood. Enoch, red-bearded and buckskin-clad, would have seemed more in place in old Fort Vancouver thirty years before, than slouching now in the doorway of an Oregon log schoolhouse.

"I'm the schoolmaster," Hartley said in a level tone.

"Schoolmaster—school-marm. All same thing." Enoch spat a brown puddle on the puncheon floor. "My old woman says this hyar boy needs some book l'arnin'. Now, I don't hold to that. I didn't have none, and my other boys didn't have none, but this hyar's the baby, and the old woman's plumb foolish 'bout him. You do the best you can, Mister. If he don't toe the mark, you lick hell out o' him."

Bud Vanning was a man grown, almost as tall as Hartley, and twenty pounds heavier. He had boasted he could lick any damyankee in the Willamette Valley, and with his brothers urging him on, he'd had a good start toward making his brag good. He laughed now, black eyes ugly, meaty lips curled contemptuously.

"He ain't man enough to lick me, Pap."

Old Enoch smiled tolerantly. "He can try, son. You stay today and see how you make out."

"I'm here to teach," Hartley said grimly. "If this boy doesn't want to learn, he shouldn't be here."

"You can be damned sure I ain't here to learn," Bud snarled.

ENOCH moved back to his horse. "Beat it into him. He'll l'arn if you hit him hard enough. That's the way I l'arned my big boys."

Hartley motioned to a seat at the end of a split log bench. "You may sit there, Bud."

"Sure, school-marm," Bud said insolently, and sat down, his long legs stretched in front of him.

"You will call me Mr. Hartley."

"Sure." The boy's grin was quick and challenging. "Mr. Hartley."

Hartley returned to his desk, feeling the tension in the room, seeing the scared look on the children's faces. Whatever might have been in Enoch's mind, there was only one motive in Bud's—to make all the trouble he could. And Hartley realized that there was but one course of action open to him.

"You don't mind me taking a chaw, school-marm?" Bud called.

Hartley wheeled. Bud had taken a long-bladed knife from his pocket and had sliced off a mouthful.

"You will do no chewing in school."

"Aw, hell! Got to have some fun." Bud stuffed the tobacco into his mouth, and slouched lower in the seat. "Bad enough to sit here and have to look at your ugly mug. A chaw might help."

Hartley came back along the aisle. He hated what he had to do, but there was no choice. He was within a step of the boy when Bud drew a long-barreled Colt from his belt.

"Don't make me drill you—" Bud began.

"You do the best you can, Mister. If he don't toe the mark, you lick hell out o' him."

Young Vanning never finished his sentence. Moving with surprising speed for a man as awkward-appearing as he was, Hartley grabbed Bud's wrist and twisted until the boy let the gun go. Hartley laid it on the desk, jerked Bud from the seat and sledged him on the side of the head.

Bud fell face-down. Neil Hartley gripped him by the seat of the pants and his shirt-collar, and shook him vigorously, as a terrier would shake a squirrel. Then he dropped the boy flat and strode back to his desk.

"You have had plenty of time to learn your spelling," Hartley nodded at a row of white-faced children. "Mark, spell *Peloponnesian*."

Bud's notion of making trouble was shaken out of his head. He got up and sat down, and when his gaze locked with Hartley's, he grinned. Hartley grinned back, tension easing in him.

BUD came to the desk when Hartley dismissed school at noon. "You reckon you can teach me anything that'll do me any good?"

"Learning doesn't do anybody any good unless a man makes use of it. Can you read and write?"

"A little. Ma, she taught me, but I can't read good enough. I'd like to know about the furrin countries. Yurrop and Chiny. And Mexico. Pap fought with Doniphan. I want to know how much he lies."

"I'll loan you some books, Bud. If that's the kind of learning you want, it's what I'll teach you."

The boy shifted uneasily. "It was Ma's idee 'bout me coming. Pap and the boys allowed I'd whup you. When they hear what you done to me, they'll be on your tail. Us Vannings hang together. Pap taught us that."

"Don't tell them."

"They'll hear. The Bonner kid will bust a gut getting home to tell his paw, and Bonner'll see Pap hears. Then there'll be hell to pay."

"I'll handle your brothers."

Bud looked at the floor. "There's Pap and five boys beside me. Cass is the oldest. He got wounded fighting with Price. He's plumb proud, and Cass is. They'll all jump you, and they'll bust you up. Bonner and his sniveling friends won't help you none."

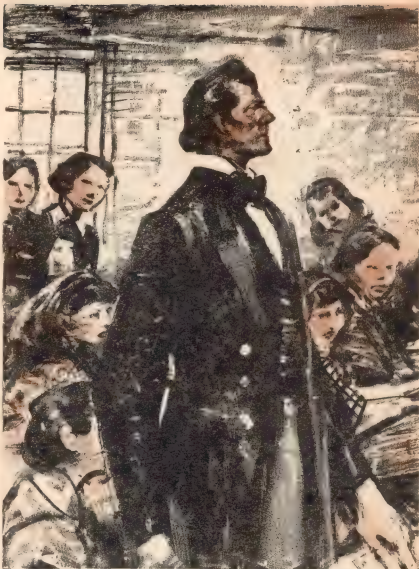
"No," Hartley said grimly. "I didn't figure on them."

"Can you shoot?"

"Not very well."

"Let's see you have a try at it."

Shrugging, Hartley picked up Bud's pistol and went outside. There had been a day when he was a good shot, but he was nearsighted now, and he



knew it was worse than useless to try. He shot twice at a fir stump behind the schoolhouse, the last bullet going wild and taking a piece of hide out the back of Parson Dailey's cow.

"Aw, hell," Bud groaned. "You ain't no good at all."

"I guess not," Hartley admitted. "My eyes are poor."

"You better pack up and git."

"I'll stay, Bud," Hartley said firmly.

From then on, Hartley had no fault to find with Bud's behavior. The boy worked willingly, read everything that Hartley gave him, and he got along with the smaller pupils. But the day of settlement was bound to come, just as Bud had warned. If for no other reason, it would come because Hank Bonner and some of the rest taunted old Enoch and the Vanning boys about the way Hartley had handled Bud.

It happened the Saturday following Bud's disciplining. Hartley walked to

the post office, the earth gloomy dark even in midafternoon with the giant trees shadowing the trail. He absently noted the string of horses in front of the saloon, but he saw no significance in their presence until Bonner sullenly handed him his mail and he stepped out of the store.

Old Enoch and Bud were squatting in front of the saloon, the five older Vanning boys lounging in the weeds at the edge of the road to Enoch's left. They were each as big as Bud, or bigger, and as tough-looking as lot as Hartley had ever seen.

"When you fight one Vanning, you fight them all," Hartley had heard that a dozen times since he had come to the Corners. He glimpsed Bonner's face at a window of the store.

Old Enoch was grinning expectantly under his red beard. Bud looked scared and worried. The older boys chewed and spat and held a sullen



silence until Hartley came opposite them. It was the black trouble-scarred one on the end who growled: "The rest of us Vannings want a little book f'arnin', school-marm."

It would be Cass Vanning, Hartley guessed. He saw now why folks around the Corners feared the Vannings. He stopped in front of Cass, who had come to his feet, peering at him as he made a quick decision. He couldn't lick the five of them. But there was one thing the Vannings admired. It had worked with Bud. It might work with the rest.

Without a word Hartley swung his fist, a short wicked right to the point of Cass' wide black-bearded jaw that knocked him flat. Hartley picked Cass up, and wheeling, dropped him into the horse-trough and shoved his head under.

"I can handle you boys if you're men enough to come one at a time,"

Hartley said coldly. "If you're wolves instead of men, you'll come at me in a pack, and maybe you can lick me."

"You're drowning Cass," old Enoch bellowed. "Let him up."

Cass was kicking and snorting and blowing bubbles under Hartley's big hand. Hartley lifted him from the trough and dumped him into the dust. Cass came to his hands and knees, shook his head and choked and spat. His four brothers, held flat-footed by the temerity of Hartley's actions, moved forward now, cursing.

"Don't let 'em, Pap," Bud cried.

Old Enoch rumbled a laugh. "Hold on, boys. The Vannings don't wolf-pack any man. Cass just wasn't big enough to do the job."

Enoch was too far away for Hartley to see his face clearly, but he had the impression the old man was grinning at him the way Bud had in the school-house that first morning.

Cass was on his feet now, still choking, water from his soaked clothes making a puddle in the dog fennel at his feet. The other boys had dropped back, still muttering, obeying old Enoch from force of habit.

"I got no use for them that gabble like geese." Old Enoch raised his voice so that Hank Bonner, watching from the store, could hear. "I've got the best piece of land between here and the mountains, and I don't aim to be run off so the goose-gabblers can grab it. Us Vannings don't run for nobody. Reckon you don't neither, Hartley. You won't have no more trouble with us." He started toward his horse. "Let's git for home."

FOR an instant Cass made no move. His black eyes, fixed on Hartley's face, were unshaded windows opening upon the rushing turbulence of his passion. He turned suddenly, and sloshed to his horse. The other boys followed. The Vannings quit town in a rolling cloud of dust; but Hartley, watching them disappear into the vaulting timber, knew nothing had been settled, that all the boys except Bud would follow Cass instead of old Enoch.

Bud came to school on Monday with a bruised and battered face that was cruel evidence of a beating. "Cass whupped hell out of me 'cause I hollered at Pap to stop the boys," Bud told Hartley that night after school. "I ain't big enough to handle Cass yet—but I'm gonna be, one of these days."

"Is Cass still fighting the war?"

"Naw. He just cain't forgit the ducking you gave him."

Hartley stayed at his desk long after Bud's horse had been swallowed by the timber. He had seen men like Cass Vanning. He had fought with them and against them during the war, big black-tempered men ruled by passion. He understood Hank Bonner too—scheming to use his neighbors' hatred for his own profit, fanning a flame that should have died long ago.

Hartley was still at his desk when the Vannings came.

There was no chance to take Cass alone this time. They moved in like the wolf-pack Hartley had called them. . . . They left him on the floor, a sodden bloody mass. Parson Dailey found him there at dusk.

Hartley limped painfully to school the next day, his face as raw as a side of beef. Every move brought misery to him. Bud didn't show up.

Hartley held his silence about what had happened, but the Dailey girl told the others, and the parson told Bonner.

It was Bonner who spread word among the settlers. When Hartley limped home after school, Parson Dailey gravely told him that the Van-

nings had gone too far, that the settlers wouldn't allow their teacher to be beaten up and let the act go unpunished.

There was no use arguing with Dailey. Bonner was the one, so after supper Hartley saddled his horse and rode through the firs to the store. A dozen men were talking in the back of the room, but Hartley's entrance silenced them.

"You've got no need to call a mob," Hartley said directly to Bonner. "I'll take care of my own troubles."

"We ain't gonna stand for no damned Copperheads beating up our teacher," Bonner snarled. "It ain't just your trouble. Might be some of the rest of us next time."

"I don't know what your plans are, but I'll make you a promise: If you men take the law into your own hands, I'll see that every one of you is punished."

Hartley limped out, leaving a sullen silence behind him, mounted, and rode back to Dailey's. The parson's horse, he saw, was gone. He went to bed, too tired and sick to think clearly about what was happening.

It was nearly midnight when talking at the door roused Hartley. He heard Mrs. Dailey say, "He's sick," and then Bud's voice, pregnant with urgency: "I've got to see him."

Hartley stood up, swayed until a wave of nausea passed, and put on his clothes. He lurched to the front door. "What is it, Bud?"

"Can you ride?" Bud asked.

"I think so," Hartley clutched the edge of the door. "Why?"

"Bonner and his bunch is fixing to swing Pap. Us Vannings never asked for no help before; but Pap, he sent for you. He figgers if you can't stop 'em, he's a goner."

"You've got five brothers," Mrs. Dailey said angrily.

"They ain't home, ma'am. The Frost kid brought word this afternoon that Bonner's bunch was getting together down the creek, and the boys, they pulled out. Reckon Bonner put the kid up to lying so the boys would be out of the way."

"Go after your brothers," Mrs. Dailey said.

"I don't know where they went. Pap told 'em to stay home, but they just saddled up and rode off without a word."

Staring at the boy's tortured face in the yellow lamplight falling through the doorway from the table behind him, Hartley wondered what he could do; but whether he could do anything or not, he had to try. He said: "Help me saddle up, Bud."

"Mr. Hartley, you can't—" Mrs. Dailey began.

Hartley went past her and across the tree-shadowed yard to the barn.

"I got my gun out of your desk," Bud said. "I figgered you wouldn't be doing no shooting."

"Give it to me."

"But you can't hit—"

"If I'm going to help, I'll have to do it my way."

They faced each other in a patch of yellow moonlight in front of the barn, anger high in the boy. Then it faded and he handed the gun to Hartley.

"Now let's get my mare saddled," Hartley said.

They set a fast pace, the trail to the Vanning farm twisting along the bank of the pounding creek. They rode through the settlement, the houses black blots squatting in the clearing. Then they were in the timber, with only now and again a patch of moonlight making a needle-laced pattern on the trail.

Every lift and drop of the saddle was torture to Hartley, but Bud Vanning never knew that. They came, in the ebb-tide hours, into the Vanning clearing. Here was the log barn and house, a scattering of outbuildings, the stubble-field partly plowed. And under a great fir in front of the house Hartley saw the milling crowd, and heard Bonner shout exultantly: "Let me have the rope, boys. We should have done this the day we heard about Fort Sumter."

"Stay out of sight unless I holler for you," Hartley ordered, and rode directly across the stubble-field toward the mob.

Old Enoch Vanning was dangling from the limb when Hartley rode up. "Cut him down," he ordered curtly, Bud's gun lined on Bonner.

Bonner cursed when he saw the gun and who held it. Perhaps because of the way Hartley had handled Cass Vanning, Bonner's slim supply of courage leaked out of him. He let go of the rope. It whined across the limb, and Enoch Vanning sprawled limply on the ground.

"You had best stay out of this, Mr. Hartley," Parson Dailey warned him. "There will be no peace until Enoch Vanning is dead."

"Are you appointed by the Lord to bring death to him?" Hartley asked.

DAILEY was silent then, and although Hartley could not see the parson's expression, he felt the shame that rose in him.

"It was you they beat up," Bonner cried wildly. "Old Enoch led the Knights of the Golden Circle during the war. We all knowed they was armed and marching up here at night, drilling and fixing to capture Fort Vancouver. He was a damned traitor; we ought to 'a' stretched his neck then."

"We're building a new State here in the wilderness, Bonner," Hartley said feelingly. "What you do tonight may set a pattern for a hundred communi-



Old Enoch Vanning was dangling

ties between the Columbia and the Rogue River. Forget the war, and let Vanning forget it."

They were thinking, these settlers, in a way they hadn't thought before. They backed away from Hartley as if they'd be glad to be gone if they could find a way to save face.

"Vanning's a traitor," yelled Bonner. "What'd you do during the war? You must 'a' been a Rebel—"

"I was wounded at the battle of Ball's Bluff," Neil Hartley said slowly. "That was the battle your Senator Baker was killed in. I had learned to know him and respect him. If he stood here tonight, he'd tell you there is an intangible thing called law that is made by the citizens of a republic." He paused, letting them think. Then he added: "Or unmade by those same citizens."



from the limb when Hartley rode up. "Cut him down," he ordered curtly, gun ready.

Bonner, under Hartley's gun, searched his cunning for something to say, and could do no better than: "But you're the one the Vannings—"

"And I'm also the one who will kill you or get killed because I believe in that intangible thing called law which is the basis of our life. You're done here now, Bonner. Ride out."

This was the moment, and Neil Hartley had his doubt. He sat there in the moonlight, a tall angular shape, clad with dignity and endowed with a strange and magnificent power.

Then Parson Dailey said humbly: "I'm beholden to you, Hartley, for preventing me from having a hand in something that would have plunged me into a hell of regret for the rest of my life."

Mounting, Dailey rode across the moon-yellowed field to the timber.

The others followed. Bonner was the last to go. There was the droop in his shoulders of a defeated man.

Hartley called Bud, and together they carried old Enoch into the house. He had been close to death, and his neck would carry the scar of the rope to the end of his life.

It was dawn when Cass and his brothers rode back into the clearing, tired and bitter with their failure to find the men they sought. Old Enoch, in bed, cursed them for not obeying him, and told them what had happened.

There was no gratitude in Cass' eyes as he stared at Hartley. Bud, standing beside the bed, said: "He held 'em off and scared hell out of Bonner with a gun he couldn't hit a bull with twenty feet away. He can't see good enough to shoot straight."

Then Cass Vanning softened and he held out his hand, for that was the kind of courage he understood. "Mebbe we've been wrong," he admitted grudgingly; and that, Neil Hartley knew, was as far as his pride would let him go.

"You've been set upon so long you think you have to fight everybody," Hartley said. "It'll be different now, if you'll let it."

"Why, hell," Cass said, "all we want is to be let alone." He glanced shamefacedly at old Enoch. "Pap's allus allowed there wasn't no good to come out of book l'arnin'. None of us can read or write but Bud."

"I'll help you on Saturdays, and nobody else need know," Hartley said, and was not surprised at the look of gratitude that came to Cass Vanning's trouble-scarred face.

"Did you ever feel like endin' it all?" Nate snapped morosely, taking a step closer to the edge of the trail.



Travel

The mule, moreover,

matic kept sabotaging our conversations, and there didn't seem to be any way short of judo to lose her. Can you imagine my reaction when the tour guide told her she was too heavy for a mule to lug down Bright Angel? I knew Carolyn had her heart set on the side-trip. Believe me, I felt like burning incense to the State of Arizona for providing the privacy for a marriage proposal. If Carolyn said yes, maybe I could even persuade her to step up to a preacher before my vacation ran out.

Anyhow, fourteen of us assembled early in the morning to start down the trail. We paraded our mules in single file past a score of spectators, worried Mom Gilbert among them. Our wind-burned guide, handsome and in chaps, rode in the lead. Carolyn followed, looking edible in a lemon-colored sweater and purple slacks. Next came a group of older women, then the men. I was last. I'm really a sad sack in the saddle, but I guess I was asked to guard the rear because my battered leather jacket made me look a man-of-the-outdoors.

By the time we passed a sign saying, "HEAD OF BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL. NO DOGS OR CATS ALLOWED IN THE CAÑON," every part of me realized that a mule picking his way downgrade was no spring-cushioned custom job. I stared through the dust at the narrow path, the rocks and boulders, the sharp turns, the scary cliffs, and wished I could explain to my mount how much my NSL Insurance and the boss of Craft Plating valued my life. My concentration on Carolyn, who now seemed intent on the guide's spiel, had faded.

As my mule slowed down near the brink of the third terrifying drop, I took to studying him closely. I didn't care what kind of life he had led or would lead from tomorrow on, but our destinies were linked for the day. He had to tote me down forty-five hundred feet and haul me up again. I wanted him to stick to the routine.

My reconnaissance showed weary, rusty brown skin and a black mane that was hunched up like an old rug. A Robert Taylor widow's-peak was located where his harness pinched his head. His ears were probably his most distinctive feature. They towered,

I AM sure very few people who ride down Bright Angel Trail at the Grand Cañon intend to propose to a beautiful girl when they reach the bottom.

You see, this year I used my week's vacation from the Craft Plating Company of San Francisco for a bus jaunt to the Cañon. It had been pretty rugged, breaking in as shipping clerk, head of receiving, assistant lacquerer and apprentice plater, all for one scrubby pay-check. I also had a stretch in the Regular Army not so far behind me; and all told, I figured this was the time for that bang-up spree. Could anything be more inviting. I asked myself, than a package tour to America's greatest natural scenic spot? Sure, but nothing I could afford!

Now, one of the main attractions at the Cañon is the ride into the Big Ditch on the back of a specially trained

mule. The way those animals are nonchalant about a trail that drops forty-five hundred feet is strictly super-mammal stuff.

Carolyn May Gilbert, a receptionist in a well-known Frisco law office, happened to be taking the same tour. Picture a tiny redhead who looks like a movie star playing *Snow White* grown up, and you have Carolyn May. I was pantingly in love with her before we passed Yosemite. Carolyn's mother was along, though, and she frowned and glared at me from the moment I casually mentioned my salary. (When will I learn to keep my mouth shut?) Incidentally, whenever I looked at Mom Gilbert, I was reminded of the pneumatic rafts we used to construct pontoon bridges with, in the Corps of Engineers.

I had a strong feeling Carolyn was falling for me, too. But Old Pneu-

Is Such an Education

gave him a good talking to . . . by EDWIN A. GROSS

even for a mule's, and seemed really proud about something.

After a half-hour's jouncing, my beast suddenly came to a full stop in the neck of a spectacular hairpin turn. This was not in the book, I thought, peering over the cliff and swallowing hard. I noticed that Mule 13 was a good twenty-five yards ahead by now. I dug my heels into my mount, but he did not budge. He grunted and snorted. I dug again.

"Quit kickin', you! What's your name?" he said. His voice was hoarse and commanding.

"Why—it's—uh—Warren," I said, trying not to act startled.

"Warren, huh? Mine's Nate," he said.

I steamed perspiration. "Glad to know you," I finally managed. "Shall we join the others?"

"Did you ever feel like endin' it all?" Nate snapped morosely, taking a step closer to the edge of the trail.

"I was in the Army," I said, leaning way back in the saddle.

"Oh." He sounded understanding. There was a long, tense pause. "Well, you ain't suffered at all till you've lived the life of a mule. 'Specially a Grand Cañon mule."

"I've never thought I wanted to be one—" I felt Nate flinch. "No offense meant," I added quickly with an undertone of panic.

"YOU'RE from the East, aren't you?" Nate asked.

"I grew up in Passaic, New Jersey," I answered. "How'd you know?"

"By the way you grip your saddle. And your accent."

"I'll tell you a secret. I moved to Frisco after I was expelled from college," I said, faking jauntiness. "I let everyone think the war interrupted my education, but the dean got to me first. Ha-ha!" I laughed unconvincingly.

"You afraid of falling?"

"Oh, no—I mean—yes!" I said unhappily.

Nate remained silent. He started forward again, gradually gaining on the others. Relief flowed through me. "There are better places to jump ahead," he muttered.

I almost shrieked for help. This was the tightest spot I'd been in since

the chemical explosion at Craft. Yet what was the sense in screeching? Nate—if that was really his name—could swiftly leap out into space before aid arrived. Besides, unless he talked to them, the other tourists would never believe my story. Carolyn would think I was a screwball or an impossible coward.

"Tell me, feller," I asked disarmingly, "does the guide know you speak?"

"That jerk!" Nate said impatiently. "I should say not! I've got a grudge against him."

We drew within five yards of Mule 13 and stopped. The whole group had lengthened a rest period to wait for me.

"We were going to go back after you. Where've you been?" Rider 13 called cheerily, with what seemed to me obnoxious good-humor. He was an eyeglassed chap, the kind who often looks ready to make a scholarly point, and instead drones on and on about why he believes Travis Jackson was a better shortstop than Marty Marion, or something like that.

"I've been admiring the scenery," I replied, smiling frigidly. I waved to the guide and Carolyn, who were looking back at me inquiringly. The whole party started moving again. I

hoped Nate's biliousness was over. I prayed that what I thought had happened had not.

A hotchpotch of notions shuffled through my mind. Maybe there was an expert ventriloquist in our crowd. Or some young smart-aleck might be hiding in the trees on the protected side of the trail with radios or portable phonographs. Or maybe there was some new signal contraption right on Nate.

I was wondering whether any of the other riders were hearing stray voices, when Nate stopped at what was easily the straightest up-and-down cliff so far. He permitted his head to droop over the ledge ruminatively.

Mule 13 was still in sight but beyond earshot when the voice came again. Quickly I slipped my hand forward to feel for vibrations in my mount's back. The sounds were coming from him, all right.

I thought of catching her, but tripped and fell against a hedgehog cactus.



"Ye gods, what a bore this Cañon is," Nate drawled. "Of course, for them still on their first few hun'ed climbs, it may be okay. Erosion, c'ra-sion, all the geology abracadabra—I'm sick of 'em. When I think I have to spend the rest of my life listenin' to guides and tourists gush—aw, you're like all the others. What's the use of talkin' to you?"

"Go on and gripe," I said hopefully. "You'll feel better. The elevator man in my building always tells me that. Only step back away from the edge."

"Look at all I have to contend with!" Nate raged, ignoring me. "Nine thousand feet of this in one day. I'd rather climb a ladder than this trail."

"I climbed the ladder of an aircraft carrier once," I said feebly.

"Besides," Nate went on, "I got the asthma. Arizona don't cure it in mules. Oh, well, I'll keep on goin'. There's a steeper place to jump from farther on down." He began moving slowly again. "Anyway, I can see you're nervous. When the time comes, I'll just hop without warnin' you."

"Thanks," I rasped. "I appreciate it."

"Do you think there'll be another war?" Nate asked.

"Do you?" I countered.

"If people have as much sense as I give them credit for," he chirruped, laughing shrilly—neurotically, I thought.

"We stayed within sight of Travis Jackson vs. Marty Marion till Nate suddenly halted in the bend of a bobby-pin turn. With vague nausea, I fastened my eyes on my saddle.

"YOU ever been psyched?" Nate asked irrelevantly.

"No," I grunted miserably.

"I wish I'd been. I've heard so much gab about it. Would you call me peculiar?"

"You bet—no, no, no!" I answered frenziedly.

Nate lumbered forward again. At least with every step we were drawing nearer the Cañon floor. There would be less pieces for Carolyn and the others to pick up when he jumped. If only I weren't last in line! There was still a chance Carolyn would worry about me and send the guide back. But, no—she was probably flirting with him—innocently, of course. And all the others were probably convinced that my riding habits were eccentric.

Nate halted once more on the brink of an immense gorge. He wheeled to the left, crossing a fringe of small rocks marking Bright Angel Trail's outer boundary. "This is it!" I thought. Good-by to the job as plater, if Hugo leaves. Good-by, veteran's bonus, if there is one. Good-by, Carolyn!

"Do you know Ferde Grofé's music?" Nate asked musingly.

"You mean Grand Cañon Suite?"



"Young man, how dare you?" shrieked Mom Gilbert, slapping his face resoundingly. "Carolyn May, you come with me this instant."

"I would have written it differently," Nate said, and jumped.

I tried to scream, but could force no sound from my throat. But Nate had leaped in place.

"That was a heck of a dirty trick!" I gasped.

"I've got news for you," Nate said, grinning wickedly. "I've changed my mind. No hoppin' till this afternoon, when we're way up hi-i-gh!"

"D-d-don't you think anyone'll believe me when I say you speak?" I stuttered hysterically.

"No," Nate said phlegmatically; "do you? By the way, you can change mounts for the trip back—if you can get anyone to swap with you."

WITH this suggestion, my mount took off so rapidly that I was almost flung over the precipice without him. Sliding, skidding, turning, he covered the last quarter of the descent to the Cañon bottom. It was the wildest ride I have ever been on, even counting the time I placed second in a Fourth of July jalopy race. When we

arrived near enough to hear the gurgling of the Colorado River, Nate veered a few feet off the trail and stopped behind some high mesquite.

"I ain't the mule I used to be!" he panted, abruptly lowering his head and pitching me to the ground.

With incredible relief I brushed the dirt off my trousers. Suddenly I remembered my romantic proposal. I probably had very little time. But I couldn't postpone it. Carolyn's mother would never let herself be ditched again.

"We've been wondering where you were," a kindly-looking middle-aged lady who was not one of the San Francisco crowd called to me. "You're the last lunch, aren't you? You'd better eat quickly."

Docilely I fetched my paper sack from the saddle-bag on Mule 13.

"I'll trade you a peanut-butter sandwich for a jelly," the lady said.

"No, thanks," I replied. Impulsively I pressed my sack into her hand. "Here, you take it—I'm not hungry. Have you seen a redhead in purple—"

Illustrated by
Charles Chickering



"Hm! She went off with the cowboy guide," the lady snapped, at once turning feline. "I saw them walking along the river. Maybe they're eating in one of those natural caves."

"Much obliged," I mumbled. I trotted across an arroyo and clambered along the rocks overlooking the white-capped rapids. Most of the tourists were returning toward their mounts. I came upon Carolyn and the guide just as he was helping her from a cozily pocketed boulder.

"Hi, there! You enjoying the trip? We're starting back now, sir," the guide said.

"I'd like to have a word with this lady first," I panted. "Couldn't you hold up the party a few minutes?"

"Okay." The guide grinned. "But make it snappy."

I stifled an impulse to swat him on the jaw. "I'm amazed you didn't know Nate—" I began fiercely, but then I realized he might call Nate something else. I instantly decided I would make him ride my mule on the way back. But Carolyn was walking away.

"Never mind," I gulped.

I ran after Carolyn, caught her sleeve and tugged her into a grove of trees.

Trembling, I backed her against a tree-trunk, and taking her hand in

mine, I looked into her eyes. "Carolyn, will you marry me?" I blurted.

"What?" Carolyn did not seem surprised.

"You will, won't you?" I cried out elatedly. "Oh, Carrie, dearest, I will always love you like this!"

"Don't be a goon," Carolyn said with perfect composure, wrenching herself free. "I won't marry you or any man who can't show me twenty-five thousand dollars in the bank."

I decided she was testing me, trying to find out how serious I was. I admired her for not allowing the glamorous surroundings to influence her overly much.

"Look—look here, honey," I pleaded. "I know every girl dreams about pretty speeches when her beau proposes, and that's how I had it planned. But there just isn't time now. And on top, your mom—"

"Oh, yes. That reminds me. Mother doesn't think you'll ever

amount to anything," Carolyn stated baldly, "and she's a very reliable judge of human nature." Carolyn's voice seemed to grow softer, more considerate. "She knew I'd have to divorce my first two husbands."

Well, I felt clipped in the teeth, I can tell you. Was this what I had survived Nate's distemper for? Anyway, how could I believe this charming girl was as heartless and lucre-loony as she sounded? Maybe old Pneumatic had coached her to play me as a shy-away-from-a-divorcée type. But then Carolyn had brushed me off with such assurance. Why, she was almost a—I could scarcely think it—a *hussy*.

Carolyn giggled, waved good-bye demurely and ran toward the willow tree which shaded her mule. I thought of catching her, but tripped and fell

against a hedgehog cactus. When I finally emerged into the clear, everyone else was in the saddle, watching for me impatiently. Depressed, I shambled up to Nate and climbed on his back.

The guide reined his mount and started up the path, the rest of the party following. I made no protest when Nate picked up the rear-guard again.

As we trudged along, my eyes grew damp with tears. I thought of Carolyn, and hated her. I thought of Mom Gilbert, and hated her more. I thought of all women, and felt ready to boom denunciations through the echoing Cañon. What luck I had met up with a crazy talking mule! He had the right idea. I hoped he would not wait all afternoon to jump.

AFTER twenty-five long minutes of gloom and jogging, Nate's pace began to slacken. We dropped ten, fifteen, then twenty yards behind Mule 13 and Travis Jackson versus Marty Marion.

Nate turned his head. "You know what?" he whispered, his lower lip quivering emotionally. "The view around here gets me once in a while. How do you like it?"

I closed my eyes, too unnerved to answer.

"What a cañon! Holy Moley!" Travis Jackson unexpectedly called out, stalled on the trail in front of us.

Irritably I nodded, and we pushed along slowly.

"Kind of glad to have this chance to talk to you," Travis prattled enthusiastically. "This is *some* experience, isn't it? How'd you like the Colorado River? Would you ever believe one little stream could carve this great big spectacle? Too bad you weren't around at lunch. I took some mighty interesting pictures." There seemed to be no need to explain my absence, for T. J. jawed right on: "My light

meter gave me some peculiar readings. First time I haven't trusted it implicitly." He stroked one of the leather cases at his side fondly. "Think I'll buy some postcards this evening as a safeguard. Been in any of the souvenir shops? This Indian stuff's attractive."

Nate must have sensed my discomfort, for he interrupted the monologue with a long, heartless bray. Travis waited for him to cease.

"Maybe I'll buy something for my sister. Got any recommendations?"

"What kind of girl is she?" I asked sourly.

"Pretty serious. Nothing flibbertygibbet about Alma!"

Nate slowly walked to the edge of the trail and looked over. With a clatter his right foreleg nudged a rock into space.

Travis flinched. "Maybe our little talk's making your mule nervous. Frankly, I haven't felt at ease since we started on this trip. Only reason I came today was to get my money's worth."

Doggedly, Nate drew abreast of T. J.'s mount. Without warning he flailed his hindlegs at his plodding stablemate.

"My goodness!" said Travis, blanching. "Better see you later!" He quickly urged his mule ahead.

I sighed, and slouched in my saddle. "Good work, Nate," I murmured. "Now if you'll just jump, I won't have to listen to that blabber-bird all the way home in the bus."

"How'd you make out in the woods?" Nate asked placidly.

"Meaning what?" I managed.

"I saw you chasin' that yellow sweater."

"Aw, she won't marry me. Her mother's made her money-mad. But the entire episode's closed."

"She's nothin' exceptional."

"I loved her very much," I said tightly.

"You were just infatuated."

"I'm not a kid," I replied huffily.

Nate grazed with relish in a bush, then chuckled. "I recognize your type, Warren. Repressed—waited too long to get married—no perspective on females—"

"Nate, no theories, please," I begged.

"Well, then forget that walkin' make-up display," said Nate gently. "Lookie! As a special favor, I'll recite what the signs on the trail've been sayin'. You been overlookin' them. The first one comin' up was 'Tapeats Sandstone—'"

"Stop it!" I yelled. "The only favor I want from you is a jump over that cliff."

"Me jump?" asked Nate incredulously. "Man, don't you realize I've changed my mind?"

"Now, listen! You can't back out like that," I said. "I've been counting



on you. Do you think I want to go up there and face Carolyn May and her mother? Besides, there's nothing in life worth the effort of getting to the top."

"You didn't have any lunch, did you?" Nate asked.

"Don't change the subject! You promised me!" I stormed.

"I didn't *promise*. Let's be exact," Nate replied, unruined.

His paternal aloofness made me furious. "Well, I'll show you!" I howled. "I'll jump off all by myself! You stand still so I can get off your back."

"It's against the rules."

"Oh, it is, huh? I'd like to see that stop me!" I managed to slip my feet from the stirrups.

Abruptly Nate reared up on his hindlegs and tossed me over his rump. "Okay, if that's what you want," he said scornfully. "Go on and break the record of the Grand Cañon mules. Get me retired."

I moved to the edge of the precipice. Cautiously I experimented dangling one foot into space. For some unknown reason I waved my arms as though I were doing a breast-stroke.

"Look out!" Nate yelled.

I jumped back quickly. "What'd you do that for?" I asked viciously.

"Just an experiment."

"Well, cut it out," I ordered suddenly. But somehow my resolution to jump was shaken.

"Quit grousing, and try lookin' at things this way, son," said Nate kindly: "This Cañon's been around jillions of years. All you've got to do is last ninety or a hundred at most."

"Did I bother you with philosophy this morning?" I grumbled forlornly. "You're getting as irritating as a woman—absolutely unbearable!"

"Warren," said Nate brusquely, "I have a little advice to give you. Get up here on my back."

I did not budge.

"Let's be practical," said Nate. "It's goin' to get cold soon. You're only posin', and kiddin' yourself. Get back in this saddle and stop foolin' around!"

In a way, I was glad Nate insisted. But I complied with a show of reluctance. Nate began plodding uphill again, talking earnestly.



"You're a sucker for a lot of claptrap put in movies an' magazines—"

"How would you know?" I interrupted scornfully.

"Don't get obnoxious," Nate said. "Maybe I'm a fool to talk to you."

"Oh, you can talk if you want," I said. I was surprised to find I was eager to hear Nate out.

"Did you ever stop to think of the consequences if Carolyn May had accepted you? Boy, oh boy, would you be fouled up!"

"You can't say that—" I protested.

"Be coldblooded," Nate snapped. "What'd you fall for in that dame? All she's got is a beautiful figure, technicolored hair and a cover-girl tilt to her nose. On her that means expensive girdles, the beauty parlor once a week, and all the luxuries credit can buy. What can a spoiled, pampered dame like that do for you?"

"I could cherish her all the days of my life," I said righteously.

"Bushwah!" said Nate. "I suppose you'd read the little ones, do the house-keepin' and 'tend to the shoppin', too."

"Ha-ha!" I chuckled mirthlessly. "You're wrong there."

"Well, do you think Carolyn May would be good at any of that?"

"You can't—tell," I said thoughtfully.

Nate snorted. "I can, bud. The answer's no. That dame would wreck you an' your bankroll before her finger was sunburned around her wedding ring."

"Maybe," I admitted.

"Now I also happen to know that a great many women in the United States are cut along diff'rent lines. They might not look so good in slacks, maybe, but they can roast a mighty decent leg of lamb."

"I like lamb," I said.

"You get what I'm drivin' at," said Nate gruffly. "Let's not kid ourselves. Life's full of ups and downs, and what most fellows need is a helpmate. Take my word for it, you've had a very lucky escape. Very!"

Nate turned his attention to the dangerously steep grade we were approaching.

IT was getting well on in the afternoon, and the huge Cañon shadows were spreading. Whenever Bright Angel Trail wound into the shade, the air became chilly; when we emerged again, the temperature soared. This violent alternation administered a sort of shock treatment to me. My spirits speedily revived. I sang, hummed, whistled and drummed my feet against Nate's side. I began to enjoy the blue sky and the gorgeous colors in the chasm for the first time.

"You're quite the happy Joe, aren't you?" Nate grunted as I started on "A flea—ha-ha!" for the third time.

"Thanks to you, my Dutch uncle," I said gratefully. "Nate, old man, I've decided to stay away from women forever." Nate snickered, but I went on wistfully. "Electroplating's my love from now on. Metals are terrific, if you stop to think about them. Gold, silver, copper, chromium—there's the glitter when for me."

"Warren," said Nate, "you'll fall for a woman again. Your type rarely doesn't. Just remember, no matter what the missus is like when she's fifty, it's still a great life. Any guy with sense'd have to have a dozen of 'em before he'd end a one of 'em."

I was touched. Nate sounded so sincere. I didn't trust myself to answer.

Nate yawned. "Well, I guess that's as far as I go in apologizin' for scarin' you before. I often feel vile in the mornin' and swell in the afternoon, even though the goin' is harder uphill."

"You can never figure genius," I said generously.

"Baloney," said Nate. "If you ask me, I'm just plain schizophrenic."

With his admission Nate quickened his pace perceptibly and finally caught up with Mule 13.

"My back feels as though it's been sparring with an egg-beater," Travis Jackson called. "I'll never be the same."

"Me either," I answered affably.

In close order our party paraded up Bright Angel Trail's last zigzags and final straightaway. A group of spectators was waiting for us on the summit, old Pneumatic scowling in the forefront.

I leaned forward. "There's that blamed girl's mother now," I whispered, my cheek brushing against Nate's neck. "The hefty one who looks like a float."

Nate brayed loudly, and in the sound I detected a guffaw.

Austerly I gazed over Mom Gilbert's head as we filed tiredly into the corral. I dismounted, and was trying a few calisthenics to limber up when she darted briskly past me and planted herself alongside the guide, who was lowering Carolyn to the ground.

Nate shook his mane jauntily and sidled over to the trio.

"Thank you so much! It's been just wonderful!" I could hear Carolyn exclaim, smiling bewitchingly at the cowboy. He twiddled his hat and shuffled his feet becomingly.

"You'd be swell to date, kid, if that old scow wasn't your mother," said a gruff male voice. Only I realized it was Nate's.

"Young man, how dare you?" shrieked Mom Gilbert, lashing at the startled guide, slapping his face resoundingly. "Carolyn May, you come with me this instant!" Mom Gilbert dragged her bewildered daughter toward the hotel, ignoring the grinning tourists all around her.

"Good old Nate!" I thought, mentally throwing him a kiss as I hobbled down the path to the coffee shop.

I paid mighty little attention to Carolyn on the return trip to California. T. J. and I spent much of the time discussing the Cañon, whether the Pacific Coast should have a third major league, and the hand-carved turquoise brooch he bought for Alma. Neither of us had seen the regal red-head since she nodded us brief good-bys in the San Francisco bus station.

Incidentally, Nate was right on the beam. I did marry only a few months after our meeting.

It was at the bus station that I first met T. J.'s sister—his name, by the way, is really Derek. Alma's good qualities weren't so apparent at first look, but once I had sampled her cooking, I began to feel differently. If I were pressed, I'd have to admit Alma's occasionally a little like Derek, especially before breakfast or at night after she's put in a hard day with the baby—but all in all, she's an awfully good wife.

If anybody who reads this rides down the Cañon in the near future and has a chance to talk to Nate, please give him my regards. Tell him the Frisco papers carried a story this month about Carolyn's third husband suing her for divorce.

Tell him also that I'll be back some day, and that I'll bring the missus and little Nate along. And that I haven't had so exciting a time as my trip down the Cañon since the morning Hugo got mad and told the boss to dip his head into the cadmium tank, and I was made chief plater in his place.

GOOD THINGS COMING!

"MY SISTER, GOOD-NIGHT!" a fascinating book-length mystery of real distinction, by Gordon McDonell. Also specially fine stories by Wilbur S. Peacock, Joel Reeve, H. Bedford-Jones, Norman Fox, William Brandon and several new writers of great promise.

Islands and Pearls

IT all began when Hattie died, as every West Coast lumber-schooner cracker knows. Hattie was the wife of Jesse Blescombe's bosom, and she sailed that pea-soup coast with him in the *Makena* for nigh on forty years. So Jesse buried her in fifty fathoms off Swiftsure Light, which certainly was proper. And the fog rolled in. Next voyage, bound as usual for San Diego out of Clallam Bay on Puget Sound, Captain Jesse passed the spot, and for some most peculiar moments saw a pool of sunshine dancing there. By all the best accounts, that's when it really happened. Jesse's mild blue eyes took on a most uncanny look, and he decided then and there to do what all his life he and Hattie had wanted to. He just put his helm for Honolulu, announcing calmly he would get to San Diego by a less-than-customary route.

Many of the lumber-schooner people say that Jesse just went nuts. Perhaps they're only envious of Jesse's marvelous adventures. Or, then again, perhaps they're right—though who is nuts and who is not, is certainly a moot question in a world so logical as ours. Mr. Daniel McCoon, the *Makena's* chief engineer, felt sure that after forty long and faithful years along the lumber ports, poor Jesse finally succumbed to the spell of the mythical fogbound witch, and would recover only after he had soaked up enough of the earth's fine sunshine. Be all of that whichever way it may, the simple fact of the matter is that Hattie was a powerful-minded woman; and when her spirit moved in Jesse, there was nothing anyone could do.

So there was the *Makena*, way down in Honolulu, where, to say the least, she was a little bit off the coasting course. And there on the bridge was Mr. McCoon, ruefully wondering what was going to happen next. When he saw Captain Jesse padding down the harbor dock, he knew he would find out soon.

Jesse was a smallish man, roundish, with a bristling red mustache, a magnificently bald and sunburned dome, and a nature happy and vigorous. Humming a merry tune, he stopped aft at the ladderway to appraise the *Makena* for a moment of hearty pride. Being empty and in the classical steam-schooner build, engine-room and bridge housings as close to the stern as possible, her maindeck, sprouting a

FED UP WITH ROUTINE, A WEST COAST SCHOONER CAPTAIN TAKES HIS SHIP TO THE SOUTH SEAS IN SEARCH OF NOVELTY—AND FINDS IT.



"Naina sick with love. Want marry," Tuan' Tu explained.

and Dancing Girls

by JACLAND MARMUR



"Well, I don't blame her a bit," Captain Jesse agreed.

forest of outswung booms, sloped heavenward at a terrifying angle. It gave her the appearance of some unfortunate creature after an unhappy fall, caught squatting with its backside in the water, its legs tossed comically aloft. But Jesse, who knew her most intimate virtues, like a man with a homely wife, saw nothing funny in her at all. He came on board.

"Now, ain't this fine?" asked Jesse on the bridge. "No fog, Daniel. Y'can see as far as y'want."

"Do tell," said Danny McCoon. "And how about Isaac Hartburn, back in Clallam Bay? He owned the lumber cargo. Remember, Jesse? To say nothing of his owning half the ship. Have you heard from Ike again?"

"Sure did," said Jesse brightly. "Here comes the barges now. Sure did."

"Is he flying down with a sheriff, or is he bringing Federal men?"

"Well," said Jesse, absently palming his sunburned dome, "in the first six cablegrams Ike sounded pretty mad, all right. But after I wirelessed him the price I sold the lumber for, his blood-pressure musta gone down a lot. Ike says if that's the way it is, I can get the *Makena* to San Diego by a circus navigation o' the globe, for all he cares. I sure wisht I'd studied up on that newfangled stuff."

"That's entirely beside the point," said Mr. Daniel McCoon. "The point is what is that tugboat doing, pushing them barges into this berth?" The barges in question were certainly shaping in to make fast against the *Makena's* side. And they were deeply laden, as anyone could see, with a wonderful assortment of rubble, huge boulders, and enormous crags of broken concrete. "Is that what we're going to load?"

"Sure is," said Jesse Blescombe with his dignified offhand air. "An' very fine ballast, too. We gotta have the ship in proper trim, Daniel, to sail the pearl'n' grounds."

"To sail—where?"

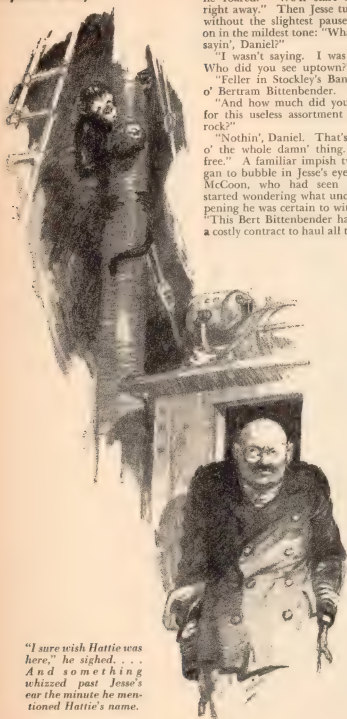
"Pearls, Daniel, pearls! Place called Fatuniva, down in the Tomato Islands where—"

"Would you mean the Tuamotus?"

"Yeah. That's right. Them oyster nests ain't been picked over since away before the war. Oughta be—"

"Now look here, Jesse! You don't find pearls in nests. Pearls grow in oysters because of internal irritation.

Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley



"I sure wish Hattie was here," he sighed. . . . And something whizzed past Jesse's ear the minute he mentioned Hattie's name.

They even do it artificial, by dropping a grain of sand inside."

"T'hell y'say! Y'mean all them oysters got to get the colic, just so fancy ladies can go around wearin' pearls? Sure ain't right." Jesse leaned over the rail of the bridge long enough to bellow instructions to Mr. Herschel

Hoggenhorn, the mate. "Spot them barges up to Number One an' Three," he roared. "We'll start in loadin' right away." Then Jesse turned, and without the slightest pause, he went on in the mildest tone: "What was you sayin', Daniel?"

"I wasn't saying. I was thinking. Who did you see uptown?"

"Feller in Stockley's Bank. Name o' Bertram Bittenbender. Why?"

"And how much did you pay him for this useless assortment of busted rock?"

"Nothin', Daniel. That's the point o' the whole damn' thing. I got it free." A familiar impish twinkle began to bubble in Jesse's eye; and Mr. McCoon, who had seen it before, started wondering what uncanny happening he was certain to witness soon.

"This Bert Bittenbender has got him a costly contract to haul all this rubble

fifty mile to sea. So me takin' it off his hands right off the barges here, is sure savin' him a lot o' financial expense."

"It certainly is," said Danny McCoon.

"But we need the ballast anyhow."

"We certainly do."

"An' that's the only reason I got the exclusive tradin' franchise from him so cheap."

"Franchise? What franchise?"

"Like I told you. For Fatuniva an' the islands in the Tomato Group."

"Oh," said Danny, beginning to feel a little bit weak.

"This Bittenbender happens to be the president o' the South Sea Island Pearlaring and Trading Company. They own the franchise, an' he signed it over to me. I got the papers in my pocket here."

"Oh," said Danny McCoon again, feeling weaker still. And he found it imperative to gasp: "How much?"

"Four thousand dollars, Daniel. Not a penny more. I studied it out. Why, sometimes just one pearl alone is worth—"

"Four thousand—" Mr. Daniel McCoon gave vent to a most unhappy moan. "I smell a very large, unhealthy rat."

"Not me," said Jesse, and his eyes began to glow. "I smell the South Sea Islands," Jesse said, and his stature grew. "I smell the ocean an' the fine hot sunshine, an' smell them coco trees. I never been there before. I never been anywhere. I never seen pearls or dancin' girls, but I'm sure gonna see 'em now!" Jesse was absently tapping his pipe on the palm of his big red hand, letting the dottle fall to the gratings of the bridge. He never would have dared to do a thing like that, if Hattie were there. Suddenly aware of it, Jesse sighed a long deep sigh. "I sure wisht Hattie was gonna be there to see them pearls an' them brown-skin girls."

A clattering roar shook the little *Makena* from stem to stern, the minute Jesse mentioned Hattie's name. Mr. Daniel McCoon looked up in alarm. He was in time to see the after booms and cargo wires all trembling fearfully as the first slingload of boulders tumbled deep in the *Makena's* hold. That's all it was, of course. But funny little prickles went crawling up Danny's spine, remembering other peculiar things like this that had happened before. It made him look obliquely at Jesse, who was quickly thrusting his pipe back in his pocket as slyly as he could. And the impish gleam was brighter than ever in his mild blue eyes.

"We better get more steam on them winches, Daniel," Jesse said. "An' I better go study out them charts."

SO the *Makena's* uptilted bows started settling in the water as she took her ballast aboard. And that's how Jesse went sailing down to the pearling grounds. He very nearly took a corner of Honolulu Harbor Light along, not being accustomed to a channel without a bar, and the sunshine being still quite a bother to his

eyes after so many fogbound years. But in all good time the *Makena* was rolling sweetly on a fine blue sea, and Jesse was perched on the rail of the bridge with his legs at a comfortable dangle, watching the boys playing acey-deucey down there on the hatch.

"This here," said Mr. Herschel Hogg-horn, who had the evening watch, "this here is a very wonderful way to go to sea."

"It's the point o' the whole damn' thing," agreed Captain Jesse blithely. "Lucky we got the forepeak rigged in Honolulu for a extra fuel tank." He took a long sniff of the evening breeze, pointing with his pipestem. "Looka them whales! Them whales, Mr. Hogg-horn, is beautiful."

"Do tell!" That was Mr. McCoon, coming up with the coffee-mugs and ready, as always, to suspect the worst. "Don't tell me we're gonna go whaling next."

"I been cogitatin' on it," murmured Jesse, taking a gulp of the hot strong brew. "But it don't come out just right." He swallowed again. "An' I never was one for eatin' fish."

"They're not fish. They're warm-blooded mammals. They suckle their young, the way humans used to do."

"I'll yell y'say! I sure would like to see a baby whale ridin' his poppa piggyback."

"That's entirely beside the point. The point is, Jesse, I been reading that franchise over."

"I WAS pretty damn' sure you would. What does it say, Daniel?"

"It's what it doesn't say that worries me. It's between this Bittenbender, all right, and a chief in the islands called Tuan-Tu. From what I can figure out, the South Sea Island Pearl-ling and Trading Company has got to supply all equipment and keep all facilities in repair, expense to be charged to the pearling and trading deals. Failure cancels the contract. Now, if—"

"What's wrong with that?"

"What's wrong is that Bittenbender sold you such a valuable franchise for four thousand dollars. That's what's wrong."

"Daniel, you certainly are a worryin' man."

"I certainly am," said Danny McCoon, in the habit of earthbound minds. "You wait till Ike Hartburn hears about this!"

Jesse studied on that a moment. "Daniel," he sighed then, "there ain't enough downright honest fun in the world. That's what gets it all loused up. Feller does what he's got in his heart an' mind to do—he's got nothin' to worry about, so long as he don't cross no one else's bows. That's the sum an' substance o' my new philosophy. Looka them sunset clouds! Them clouds is gonna look wonderful,

pilin' like cheesecake over Fatuniva Head. We're gonna be there pretty soon. You tell the boys, Herschel. We're gonna see pearls an' South Sea Island girls, an' if they ain't happy, you let me know." Jesse popped down off the rail. "I shoulda changed the course four hours ago. So many interestin' things to see, I plumb forgot. Sure did." He poked his head in the wheelhouse door. "Port the hellum, Pete—dammit! I mean right rudder! The course is south."

AND that's how the little steamer-schooner *Makena* came to the Tuamotus to look over the pearling grounds. She made her landfall on a day of brilliant sunshine, wallowing in a foamy cobalt sea with the southeast tradewind strong. Jesse was pretty excited, hopping around the bridge and pointing out the sweet-smelling island.

"There oughta be a channel through the coral reef," he informed the mate from what he had read in the pilot book. "An' there oughta be a warehouse jetty inside that there lagoon. Can you make it out yet, Herschel?"

"There's a wharf, all right." Mr. Hogg-horn passed his glasses across. "But you sure can't go alongside, Cap'n. The combers is rollin' clean on the beach."

Mr. Hogg-horn's judgment was sound. When Mr. McCoon came up on the bridge after they rang the engines off, he found the *Makena* prudently riding her anchors outside. Danny wiped his hands on his pluck of cotton waste and ruefully looked around. Plainly, the opening in the reef at the mouth of the broad lagoon was a great deal wider than safety required, and a weather breakwater, intended to seal off the long trade swell, was broken apart. The hills of ocean marched steadily through the ragged breach, spouting jets of foam. Not even an island schooner could safely berth or find refuge inside.

"It's really too bad," said Mr. McCoon, the tinge of irony broad in his tone, "that that Bittenbender fellow didn't tell you about this before you bought what you bought. You don't suppose, Jesse," Danny asked sarcastically, "that by any chance he knew?"

"Y'don't go pearlin', anyhow," said Jesse airily, "tied up to no coconut wharf. Looka them outrigger canoes comin' through that surf! That there is boatmanship. Put down the ladder, Herschel. Here comes the pearlin' people now."

It was a very idyllic sight indeed. The thatch houses of the village sparkled under swaying palms along the shore, the water between the distant beach and the *Makena* swarmed with canoes. Soon they were bobbing close aboard, and the boys on the fore-deck called greetings down to the

babbling, handsome-breasted girls. But Jesse kept his dignity. Down in the biggest war canoe of all, the man beneath the after canopy stood like a statue of bronze in a multi-colored leather cape. That man, Jesse knew, was the Chief called Tuan-Tu.

"Greetin' an' salt irritations!" roared Jesse in his best deepwater voice. "This here is the lumber-schooner *Makena*, bound from Puget Sound to San Diego!" The excited murmuring that instantly arose made Jesse hasten to explain himself. "We figger to go by way o' Cape Horn," he said in a breezy offhand way. "How is the pearlin' business nowadays?"

The murmuring Jesse heard was spreading wildly among the canoes. It sounded to Danny as if they were all repeating a name. But Chief Tuan-Tu spoke just then, and what he said made Danny groan.

"Pearls finish." The voice had a somber dignity. "Pearls finish long time now." He flung up one arm, pointing to where the breakwater should have been, saying again with emphasis: "No pearls!"

"No pearls," echoed Mr. Daniel McCoon. "Just like I suspected. Now—"

"Who's this Hugo Sandago feller them girls is all hollerin' for?" Captain Jesse murmured. "You ever hear of him, Daniel?"

"Never did. He must be the local hero here."

Jesse nodded, knowing Mr. McCoon had a great understanding of such unimportant matters. And plainly, he was right. Because when they went down to the maindeck to welcome the island chief aboard, the very first word he spoke was the hero's name.

"Sandago!" said Tuan-Tu at the ladderhead, raising his arm, a look of zeal in his limpid eyes. "Hugo Sandago!" he cried.

"Damn' right!" said Jesse, always willing to please. And he answered at once the gesture of salute to honor their famous hero's name. "Sandago!"

THE effect was startling: The brown giant spun around; he made some magnificent gestures toward the water, and exhorted his people with a stream of liquid gutturals. The answering babble down there was a marvelous thing to hear. Then the paddles all dipped in the sunset light, and the canoes went streaming back for the shore. Even the pet monkey on Tuan-Tu's shoulder caught the excitement. Chattering fiercely, it leaped to the roof of the pilot-house, going foot-over-hand up the funnel stay. When Tuan-Tu turned, he held an empty coconut-shell in his palms which the royal attendant beside him carefully filled with a nutty liquid from a large yellow gourd. Tuan-Tu's face was wreathed in a happy smile as he held out the libation.

"Hugo Sandago!" he said.

Jesse knew right away what was proper. He accepted the toast with dignity. "Sandago!" said Jesse, and he drank it down.

"People come back," grinned Tuan-Tu. "*Kaikai-eat. Inu-drink.*"

"That's entirely beside the point," Mr. Daniel McCoon put in just then, fluttering the franchise papers in his hand. "The point is how about this! How about the South Sea Island Pearl-ling and Trading Company?"

"Bittenbender!" Tuan-Tu spoke the odious name in a sudden rage, the minute he heard what Danny said. And he spat on the deck to show how he felt. Once more he tossed an arm toward the brawling mouth of the darkening lagoon. "Bittenbender! No good!" And he spat again.

"No pearls. No cargo." Danny gave vent to a long, deep moan. "Two thousand miles from nowhere! What the hell are we gonna do now?"

"We're gonna have fun," said Jesse, absently reaching for the refilled coconut-shell. "You go ask the steward, Herschel," he told the mate, Mr. Hoggenhorn, "to bust out some cases o' beer. They sure think a lot o' their local hero, an' we gotta hold up our end." Captain Jesse sighed, sadly reflecting on how much evil there was in an otherwise wonderful world. Then he raised the coconut-shell in the proper sign of salute. "Hugo Sandago!" Jesse said, and with dignified gusto he drank again.

AND that's how the party began. The canoes came out, the moon came up, and the southeast trade blew sweet. The warriors brought their spears and ceremonial shields, and the island girls brought whatever they had. Soon the *Makana's* hatch was littered with tropical food—small roasted pig on pandanus leaf, baked breadfruit, browned yams, and succulent plantain. There were also plenty of coconut shells and yellow gourd of native wine, to say nothing of Jesse's Clallam Bay beer. Pretty soon the soft throb of drums began, and the bosun brought his concertina out. The night overflowed with music, the sigh of wind in the cargo gear—and a joyful giggle or two from shadowy corners of the deck. Jesse saw the dancing in the moonlight; Jesse heard the laughter all around; and Jesse's heart was full.

"My, ain't this fine!" said Jesse, bursting with kindness and brotherly love and swaying a little as he passed a shellful of wine to Mr. McCoon and another bottle of beer to the Chief called Tuan-Tu. "My, ain't this fine!"

"It certainly has its points," Danny was forced to agree, filling the coconut-shells again. "This girl here, Jesse, appears to be dancing especial for you."

"*Tama hine,*" Tuan-Tu explained. "My daughter. Naina sick with love. Want marry."

"Thell y'say! Well, she certainly is a well-built girl, as anyone can't hardly help but see. I don't blame her a bit," Captain Jesse agreed.

"Hugo Sandago!" said Tuan-Tu, his voice a bit thicker than usual.

At the sound of the name, Naina ceased the rhythm of her swaying dance, to drop on her heels beside Jesse. He thought all the others, too, were murmuring their island hero's name. And he couldn't help reflect that this Hugo fellow, hero or no, must certainly be an awful chump to spurn such an armful as Naina was. He probably said as much, in a hazy way, of other things.

"Oh, no!" The girl's voice had a stirringly liquid quality. "Want marry Jesse," she longingly explained. "Hugo Sandago! Please, Cap'n, you fix?"

It sounded a little confusing to Jesse, who thought probably he'd heard it wrong. Because Jesse was mellowed with the marvel of it, down in the South Sea Islands, seeing the wonders of the world and all. He was thinking of Hattie with tenderness, poor Hattie, who never in her life did what she really wanted to. He was thinking of their years on the fog-bound lumber coast, especially during prohibition times, when Hattie made doughnuts and the steward made beer. It made Jesse's eyes grow dim.

"I sure wisht Hattie was here," he sighed, "to see all the wonderful things there is to see."

Something whizzed past Jesse's ear, and a loud thump sounded on the deck, the minute he mentioned Hattie's name. It made Danny McCoon look aloft in alarm. He thought he saw Tuan-Tu's little monkey halfway up the mast, another missile in one free paw. But Jesse knew better. He drew his arm from around Naina's waist as slyly as he could. But he wasn't quick enough. The next coconut struck him full on top of his round bald dome—and with a sigh of deep understanding, Captain Jesse went peacefully to sleep.

THE following morning, taking strong black coffee on the bridge, Jesse learned the worst from Mr. McCoon.

"It ain't bad enough," said Danny in his blackest judgment mood, "to be down here on a worthless pearling franchise—you gotta get all mixed up with a native girl besides!"

Jesse was kind of hurt. "Are you by any chance suggestin' I was drunk?"

"Certainly not, Jesse! But the devil only knows what you did, while you were showing her round the ship. Now she wants to marry you."

"Thell y'say!" Jesse dropped his emptied coffee-mug in the binocular

rack. "Well, if I did—I did. Put the workboat in the water, John," he called over to the third mate, who had the morning watch. "I'll just go ashore an' find out."

"Now, look here, Jesse! The only sensible thing to do is to get out of here. I know how it is. Things happen like that, and next morning you don't feel so good. You—"

"Bellywash! I feel right fine. An' besides," said Jesse, because Jesse was an honest man, "I ain't gonna break no pure girl's heart."

SO Jesse went pulling for the palm-fringed shore. Even inside the lagoon the cobalt swells ran strong, and Danny was so interested in watching Jesse's boat get swamped in the surf that he didn't notice an island schooner lifting its topsails above the seaward horizon rim. By the time Jesse came back, spryly climbing the ladder to where Mr. McCoon was waiting in dire suspense, the schooner, with two very funny-looking craft in tow, was tacking the distance down toward anchorage.

"Well," asked Danny mournfully, wondering what would happen now, "when are the nuptials taking place? Did you find out who Hugo Sandago was?"

"Sure did," said Jesse, bright as a pin. "What the hell is that schooner doin' here? Sure did."

"Well?"

"He ain't nobody. What they meant was—'You go San Diego!'"

"Oh," said Danny.

"Findin' we was bound for there is what got the women excited. They heard that's where all the sailors are, so that's where they all wanna go. San Diego. It seems, Daniel, that durin' the war the Navy was here."

"Oh," said Danny, beginning to feel a little bit faint.

"Seems like a Japanese submarine tossed some shells around an' busted the breakwater all apart. Bittenbender is supposed to 'fix it, an' he won't. They got no use for him. Them people, Daniel, is sure gonna have hard times, what with no tradin' schooners stoppin' here any more, not bein' able to get inside. I wonder," Jesse wondered, "what the hell this one wants!"

"Oh," said Danny again, feeling fainter still. "What about you and Naina?"

"She don't wanna marry me! She's in love with a Navy cook, third class. Honolulu feller, name o' Jesse Kama-kea. Naina's whole tribe came here from a different island when all the pearl'n' beds give out. That's where she met this fine Hawaiian boy. But she had to leave her island right after he sailed away. Now he don't know where she is, an' she can't let him know, no ships comin' here at all any

more. So I got this Jesse Kamakea's serial number off the dogtag he give her for a love souvenir. I promised her I'd find out from the Navy where to write him, an' let him know where she is. Then he'll come an' get her. I'm gonna fix the whole thing up."

"That's entirely beside the point," said Mr. McCoon. "The point is we still haven't got an ounce of cargo in sight. Besides which, that schooner is certainly anchoring over there, dropping her sails and sending a boat across. You don't suppose," snarled Danny McCoon, "that it's Bertram Bittenbender himself, coming personally to deliver the pearls?"

Jesse paid no heed to such outrageous sarcasm. He just turned and looked. You couldn't take Jesse by surprise. Not since his personality got whole. "That's who it is, all right," he said. "What the hell is he doin' here?"

The native canoes were swarming out by now. But they weren't elated at sight of the first trading vessel to touch their island in so many months. Recognizing the man in the boat's sternsheets at the same time Jesse did,

they seemed, in fact, to be howling with rage. Bittenbender grabbed at the *Makena's* ladder with intense relief, clambering aboard. A sharp-nosed little man dressed in loose-hanging whites, with an angular face and crafty small black eyes, he looked Jesse over with mirthful scorn from the safety of the deck.

"I don't understand, Captain Blescombe," he said, the laughter of ridicule lush on his lips, "how the devil you ever got here. Did you find any pearls?"

"You know damn' well we didn't!" exploded Danny McCoon, wrathfully beginning to see the light. "What's more, you knew all the time that breakwater was busted wide open and

the franchise not worth a damn! That's why you sold it to Jesse in Honolulu for four thousand bucks. And to top it off, you got us to haul away a shipload of useless rubble and rock, making you an extra pretty piece of change besides! You—"

"Business," grinned Bert Bittenbender, "business is business, I always say."

"Jesse, he certainly took you for a ride."

"He certainly did," said Jesse. "Except he forgot the copra."

"He forgot—*what*?"

"Well, Daniel, there sure as hell ain't no pearls in any o' the lagoons no more. But Tuan'Tu has kept his part o' the contract good, an' the South



"You get the hell off my ship!" Jesse bel-lowed at Bittenbender. "I get myself provoked, I'll—"



"We never forget you, Cap'n," Naina said, staying with Jesse to the last.

Sea Island Pearl and Trading Company's coconut trees has been doin' exceptional fine. What with no ships to haul it away, there's a couple thousand tons o' dried copra in the warehouse by that landin' wharf inside. That copra," said Jesse, scratching the bristles of his red mustache with his pipestem, "would certainly bring a fancy price in Honolulu town."

"It certainly would," agreed Bertram Bittenbender, cackling with glee. "I assure you I didn't forget it at all. That's exactly why I'm here."

"Trouble is," sighed Jesse, studying on the problem, "we can't load it out here. And with the breakwater busted, we can't go inside."

"You mean you can't, Captain Blescombe!" Bittenbender was delighted to expound his cleverness to so foolish a man. "I flew to Tahiti from Honolulu and sailed that chartered schooner from there. Tuan'Tu and his people are angry with me now, but when they see the cheap jewelry, cooking pans, knives and calicoes I've got—they'll trade the copra quick enough. You might notice," Bittenbender went on, hugely amused, "that I've got two landing craft in tow, the kind they used on the beachheads in the war. Swells don't bother them a bit. They'll just run inside, slap their ramps on the sand and—presto!—my copra is lightered aboard out here as quick as you please!"

"T'hell y'say!" Captain Jesse mildly blinked his eyes. "Trouble is, Mr. Bittenbender, that copra belongs to the South Sea Island Pearl and Trading Company, an' by the contract you signed—that's me."

"Wrong again," the other grinned. "That breakwater is broken, and a breakwater is a harbor facility. The franchise plainly states the company must keep all facilities in repair, or the agreement is void. So there isn't any contract. It's canceled! The copra is open to whoever can trade for it. That's me—not you."

"JUST like I suspected," groaned Danny McCoon in abject despair.

"We might just as well wind the anchors up. If Hattie was only here, we would never have got in such a cock-eyed mess."

"That's right," mourned Jesse with a tender sigh. "Hattie always done the paper work."

Three mynah birds, like three blinding shafts of light, went flashing past Jesse's ear, the minute he mentioned Hattie's name. They shot straight as arrows to alight on three crags of stone jutting up from what was left of the shattered breakwater at the mouth of the blue lagoon, hopping daintily up and down over there, chirping in the sun. Danny imagined the tradewind began to die away at once, the seas to grow more smooth and flat. And all

at once Mr. Daniel McCoon saw the uncanny light glow weirdly in Captain Jesse's eye. Bert Bittenbender, not noticing things like that, was turning with triumphant scorn for the ladderway.

"Business is business," he heard Jesse murmuring behind his back. "Y'gotta bake a duck to eat a duck. That's what Hattie always said." Her spirit was moving in Jesse, and right then and there Captain Jesse got mad. "If I fix that breakwater, the contract is sound. An' if the contract ain't canceled—the copra is mine." Jesse was watching the mynah birds over there. "So that's what I'm gonna do!"

Bittenbender spun around. "Fix it?" he spat scornfully. "With what?" "With the useless ballast you got us to haul away for you! That's the point o' the whole damn thing. What we got in our holds is just what that breakwater needs! We'll go over an' dump it where it belongs."

"You—" Bittenbender's face began to get pale. "You can't!" he spluttered. Then for an instant he brightened. "There isn't water enough over there! You can't do that!"

"T'heh I can't! The spirit of Hattie was moving—strongly in Captain Jesse now, and he poked his head in the wheelhouse door. "Man to the hellum!" Jesse roared, excitedly hopping around. "Stand by the anchor windlass, Mr. Hoggenshorn! . . . You get the hell off my ship!" he bellowed at Bittenbender, who was paler still. "I get myself provoked, I'll tell my friend Chief Tuan-Tu to let his warriors really take care of you!"

Mr. Bittenbender hastily backed away down the ladder to his boat, where shouts of rage engulfed him from the native canoes. Pasty-faced by now, he shook a wrathful fist aloft.

"Your ship'll get stranded high an' dry! You can't do that!"

"T'heh I can't!" Jesse's face, like a round red moon, poked over the top of the *Makena's* rail. "You're forgettin' a steam-schooner's build! I'll go poke my bows right up on that coral an' sand an' start dumpin' the boulders in the breakwater hole with the heavy lifts. When you empty a steam-schooner's holds," Jesse roared, "her bows stick right straight up in the air! So we'll slide right off again!"

WHICH is exactly what Jesse did, to the howling delight of the islanders and the discomfiture of Bert Bittenbender. When Jesse backed the empty *Makena* off the shallows, churning water and mud, the mynah birds came out to circle his head three times, and then flew away. The minute they did, Danny noticed the wind began to sing again and the seas to rise. Bittenbender, making sail on his chartered schooner, hurled violent imprecations from the taffrail as he sailed away, his unused landing barges still in tow. But Jesse steamed into the sheltered lagoon where the water was smooth, now the breakwater breach was healed. He tied up to the wharf and safely took his cargo aboard. Till the time for parting came, and the little *Makena* sailed out again on a blue-white, sun-drenched sea, escorted by a swarm of canoes, Chief Tuan-Tu's in the lead, waving heartfelt appreciation up to Jesse on the bridge!

Naina and a dozen of her people stayed aboard the *Makena* till the island began to fade astern. Then their bronze bodies perched in silhouette on the rail. Waving last farewells, they dived overside to swim to their canoes. It was a very wonderful sight to see.

"We never forget you, Cap'n," Naina said, staying with Jesse to the last. "You fix breakwater. You save our people trouble. We not forget. You tell my Jesse Kamakea I love him much."

"Sure will," said Jesse, his heart full of joy. "Y'got nothin' to worry about. Sure will."

Even Danny McCoon was touched, seeing the girl's shapely figure outlined on the bridge-rail against a tropic sky. Mr. McCoon was reflecting on the weird glitter he saw at odd times in Jesse's eyes. He was beginning to suspect a most uncanny power his friend, Captain Jesse, had.

"We sure had a wonderful time," he heard Jesse tell the girl. "We won't never forget the Island of Fatuniva."

"This not Fatuniva!" Naina quickly turned her head, her sloe-black eyes looking down. "This Hakurima. Remember, Cap'n! You tell my Jesse Kamakea this island Hakurima! Fatuniva hundred mile away." She waved her arm toward the west. "Over there!"

With that she dived cleanly into the water, and Jesse watched her swim to her canoe. Behind him on the bridge Mr. Daniel McCoon just mournfully shook his head. No wonder crafty Bittenbender was so surprised to find Jesse there! Jesse found the wrong island—and even that came out all right. That's where the copra was. Maybe it wasn't any uncanny power at all. Maybe it was just that Jesse's heart was pure.

"Just goes to show you, Daniel," Jesse Blescombe sighed just then, already idly wondering to what wonderful port of the wonderful world he would like to take the *Makena* next, "just goes to show you how wrong them charts can be."

"Water, Water Everywhere—"

AND most of it isn't fit to drink—but that need not bother you, for your only problem is to furnish the name of a body of water (river, lake, sea, etc.) commonly associated with each of the persons in the list below.

A score of fifteen answered correctly is about average.

- (1) Ella Logan
- (2) Brigham Young
- (3) "Papa" Joffre
- (4) Edgar Lee Masters
- (5) Admiral Dewey
- (6) Darling Nellie Gray
- (7) Eliza
- (8) Wm. Henry Harrison
- (9) William Tell
- (10) Admiral Helfrich

A Quiz

by Ed Dembitz

- (11) John Ericsson
- (12) Ivan Petrusky Skavar
- (13) Thoreau
- (14) Bonnie Eloise
- (15) Oliver Perry
- (16) Gertrude Ederle
- (17) Balboa
- (18) Johann Strauss
- (19) General Custer
- (20) Sam McGee
- (21) The Pied Piper
- (22) Stephen Foster
- (23) Jacques Cartier
- (24) Leander

Answers:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Loch Lomond | 14. Mohawk River |
| 2. Great Salt Lake | 15. Lake Erie |
| 3. Marne River | 16. English Channel |
| 4. Spoon River | 17. Pacific Ocean |
| 5. Manilla Bay | 18. Danube River |
| 6. Kentucky River | 19. Little Big Horn River |
| 7. Tippecanoe River | 20. Lake LeBarge |
| 8. Lake Lucerne | 21. West River |
| 9. Java Seas | 22. Svanne River |
| 10. Hampton Roads | 23. Gulf of St. Lawrence |
| 11. Black Sea | 24. The Hellespont |
| 12. Walden Pond | |

The Bride of the Sphinx



by

H. BEDFORD-JONES

NOW ALMOST IN OUR OWN DAY THE SPHINX EMERALD TURNS UP IN CAIRO TO WORK ITS MALIGN MAGIC IN A MEMORABLE DRAMA.



"Herodotus made no mention of a second Sphinx," I said.

I FOUND that by any standard postwar Cairo was a tough place. It was booming with gamblers, hashish-runners, wealth, Levantine riffraff of all sorts, and hatreds. Not only the half-scorched racial and religious hatreds of the old days, but the newer hatred of Pan-Arabs for Christians, of Syrians for French, of Greeks for English, and so on. As an American, and as traffic agent for the new Consolidated Airlines, I was fairly

immune to these passions; but blood was shed of nights, and the fine art of murder was being carried to a 33° peak with little pretense of concealment.

Getting the local offices established for my company was a slow business, and I had plenty of time to see the sights—which of course I had seen often enough during the war, when our first tanks dropped in to lend a hand. Running into Tom Keating in Cairo

was pure accident. One morning he came walking into the hotel dining-room while I was at breakfast, and recognizing me, came straight to my table.

"Jack Hawkins! Never expected to see you here again—this is simply great!" he exclaimed heartily.

I would never have known him. We had become good friends during the final Alamein campaign, when his unrivaled knowledge of the desert had been of immense value to our tank people. Tom Keating had been doing archaeological work in Upper Egypt for some years, and in those

days was a stalwart, handsome giant. Now he was a frail shadow of himself, massive frame shrunken, face deeply lined and leathery, with the rapt distance-eyes of the desert-dweller. But when he dropped into a chair and we gripped hands, his radiant smile broke out in all its old charm.

"I'm glad, glad," he said. It struck me that he was lonely—a strange thing for Sahib Keating, as his English crowd used to call him. We chatted for a bit, until I asked what he was doing now. He gave me an odd unsmiling look.

"Seeking, Hawk. Just seeking. I've been tracking down something that doesn't exist, you'd say offhand; yet I've found it. Something so fantastic that they all term me a fool. Something I've now proved true, though I doubt if my findings will be accepted. That's one thing. Beyond it lies another search even more fantastic, for something I can't ever hope to find."

KEATING was very much the scholar, but he was an idealist, a bit of a dreamer, apt at strange fancies and odd imaginings. In the war days we had been quite close, and the momentary magic of this unexpected meeting drew us close again, so I did not hesitate now to put the question bluntly.

"What is it you've found, Sahib?"

He hesitated, then gave me another of his oddly intent looks.

"The other Sphinx."

"What do you mean?" I suspected some leg-pulling. "Not another Great Sphinx, surely?"

"Identical. Precisely the same, built from the same plans—"

"Built? Nonsense! The Sphinx wasn't built, but carved out of rock," I broke in.

"Partly built, Hawk. And the temple between its paws was built."

"But, Sahib! As far back as history runs, the Great Sphinx has been unique, the one and only!"

"You're mistaken, old chap," he said briefly. Then I knew he was in dead earnest, and a silence fell between us. The other Sphinx? He might as well have said the other Moon!

I am pretty well read; had another Sphinx ever existed, I would have heard about it. No such thing is mentioned by Herodotus or other ancient writers; no such thing has ever been known. Of course, both Greeks and Egyptians made small sphinxes of various kinds, with different sorts of heads, but the Great Sphinx has always stood absolutely alone.

"I know," Keating spoke abruptly, with a weary air. "You're like the rest. You think I'm mad, out of my head."

I did; there was nothing else to think. But the hurt in his eyes stung me into sharp and fervent denial.

"I don't—not for a moment! I know you too well. But I don't savvy it, Sahib. If you say it's so, okay. Lay down the cards and show me."

He warmed visibly. "Thanks, old fellow. I'll do just that. Not a very simple matter, though. There are involutions and complications."

"A woman?"

"The woman, yes. Also, an emerald that disappeared a hundred and fifty years ago, when Napoleon's army occupied Egypt. No ordinary stone, but an historic emerald, famed in legend and story—a unique thing, a freak of nature. Surely you've heard of the Sphinx Emerald?"

Poor Keating—hipped on this Sphinx notion; must be a monomania with him, I thought. Yet during thousands of years the Great Sphinx has affected the imagination of men—even the ancient Egyptians knew little more about the critter than we do—in a vital manner; so Keating was just one more victim.

"The name of the Sphinx Emerald strikes a familiar chord, somehow," I replied, "but I can't place it. Probably read about it somewhere."

He nodded. "Probably—in the pages of Plutarch's 'Morals,' for instance. Or in Eusebius, in *Agricola*, in Fernand's 'Cleopatra,' in the 'Lapidarium' of Patkanov, in the travels of Tavernier. Richelieu bequeathed it to his niece; Coeur-de-Leon won it in the Holy Land; then Alexander took it from the scepter of Darius—I could go on endlessly about the thing!"

"Are you talking about an actual emerald?" I asked, staring at him.

"An actual emerald, an actual Sphinx," he replied. "I presume you know that a flawless ruby or emerald is practically non-existent?"

I nodded. "Of course; ain't no such animal in a beryl crystal. Corundum, either. Why?"

"What ruins other jewels makes this emerald unique. It has enormous flaws, even visible to the naked eye. Viewed from either side, these flaws take on the exact shape of the Sphinx in profile. The thing has an hypnotic effect."

"How do you know? Have you ever seen it?"

"I tell you it's been lost for a hundred and fifty years," he replied irritably. "I'm giving you a consensus of the reports on it—the facts. There's legend enough besides, heaven knows! It seems to have exerted a peculiar influence on the imagination, as though merely gazing on that shadowy sphinx-image in the stone were enough to start a flow of the most fantastic thoughts imaginable."

"Auto-hypnosis," I suggested.

"Of course. Well, when last seen, the emerald was in a miserable little village out in the Mokattam hills—the empty hills south and east of the city.

I've established this much. I have a camp near the spot, and come into town a couple of times a month for mail and supplies. If you like, I'll run you out there now, and show you my data on the other Sphinx. You can return this evening, or tomorrow."

I was delighted by his offer, and said so to him. . . .

The village, El Bakri by name, was at some distance from Cairo, so Keating arranged to meet me in half an hour with his car, an old Army jeep that could negotiate the sandy tracks or even the open desert without trouble. Those desolate, empty hills overlooking the Nile valley from the eastward have not changed since Egypt was born. Upon this, we parted.

Keating had said no more about the woman in the case, and I was curious as to her connection with his mania, for so I regarded it. Here, as it chanced, luck popped up to assist me. I was asking for mail at the hotel *bureau* when two people paused just beside me to light cigarettes. The man was young, swarthy, rather horsey in dress and air, arrogant and with bejeweled hands. I never fancied men who wore jewels. But his companion—

If I say that she was Linda Grey, the English cinema star, it may mean little to you. Instead, I will say that she was a radiantly beautiful young woman, fresh and lovely as the dawn, with a slightly calculating eye and repulsively heavy lipstick. They passed on, and as the desk-clerk handed over my mail, I asked:

"Wasn't that the famous Linda Grey?"

"Indeed, yes," he assented. "She is occupying one of the river-suites. The gentleman with her is the big cotton broker, James Malek. His grandfather was Malek Pasha, who owned half of Upper Egypt, in his day."

I THOUGHT no more of it until, while waiting on the hotel veranda, I saw the same couple out in front. They were getting into a huge flashy yellow Isotta, when along came Keating. He was driving a tiny, shapeless, colorless old jeep fitted with bulging low-pressure tires for desert work.

He halted beside the Isotta. Obviously all three were of old acquaintance, for Linda greeted Tom Keating with intimate cordiality; I could almost see her turn on the charm full force. Malek seemed annoyed, to put it mildly. Keating ignored him and looked ten years younger as he spoke with the girl, all his heart shining in his eyes. She broke into a gay laugh, and her voice reached me briefly.

"Very well, Sahib, if you find it for me, I'll keep my word!"

"Not much, my lady," intervened Malek, almost savagely. "I'll have a thing or two to say about that!"

Linda turned to him with cool, arrogant insolence. While I did not catch her words, her look was enough; she put him in his very sulky place, and Keating grinned amiably. After a bit more talk, Malek tooled the sporty Isotta away, and I descended the steps to save Keating the trouble of parking. The encounter had left him jubilant and enthused; he chatted brightly as the old jeep bounced us out the city streets and past the Mameluke tombs, gaining the road for the hills.

I scarcely listened to him. In that encounter the tragedy of his position had been revealed to me, merely by faces and gestures and looks. Linda Grey was the woman in the case. That he had fallen for her heart and soul was only too evident; he was that type of man. But she had not fallen for him. Her half-tolerant, half-amused manner told its own story.

PROBABLY, I reasoned, she was using him to egg on this Gippo, whose Levantine soul would be alarmed and infuriated at finding an Englishman in his path. But the Englishman was dog-poor. The Levantine was Croesus-rich, and was of course accepted in Egyptian circles as a gentleman; in the eyes of Islam, all races and colors are equal.

"I'm based at El Bakri for two reasons," Keating said, as we jounced along the road to the hills. "First, because a well at the village gives us a necessary water supply. Second, because the site of the other Sphinx was close by, and it was at El Bakri that the Sphinx Emerald was last seen."

As though to forestall any comment from me, he went on to tell about the loss of the emerald, giving it as fact.

When Napoleon's army smashed the colorful array of the Mamelukes at the Battle of the Pyramids, a dead Mameluke chief was plundered by Pierre Fabre, a junior member of the Commission of Arts and Sciences that accompanied the army; and among his loot was the emerald. It was set in a ring, which he wore. Later, one of the French savants identified the gem as the famous Sphinx Emerald, and many efforts were made to buy the ring from him, but Fabre refused to part with it. He had even refused a large sum offered by Bonaparte himself.

During the native rebellion against the French, Fabre commanded a half-dozen men stationed at the outpost of El Bakri. Attacked, they held off the Arabs for a day or two, until their ammunition ran out, then were rushed and sabered. The emerald had vanished and was not found on Fabre's body. The Arabs, who had always regarded the stone with superstitious awe, claimed to know nothing about it; and since the entire party of French had been wiped out, none remained to tell any tales.



The woman in the case was Linda Grey, the English cinema star—radiantly beautiful, with a slightly calculating eye.

"And that's that," Keating concluded. "I don't expect to find it, of course. It may now be on the finger of some Arab who doesn't dream what a wonder-jewel it is. It'll turn up again, as it has ere now, after a century or so, perhaps in Siam, perhaps in Russia. Well, forget it, and we'll come back to realities. The other Sphinx, at least, couldn't be lost overnight and leave no trace."

"You haven't really found it?"

He broke into a gay laugh.

"Haven't I, though—and the most wonderful woman in the world to boot! But there's El Bakri ahead.

The camp is only a half-mile up the wadi."

Except for modern Government-enforced sanitary improvements, I suppose that mud-hut village had not changed in five hundred years. Remnants of an ancient wall could be seen surrounding it. Flies and naked brats and pottery abounded. There were vats of clay brought from somewhere, for the pottery-making, and a few scraggly trees surrounded the well. We passed without lingering, following a sandy track along the wadi, seeing nothing but patches of *terfa*, the thorny camel-fodder growth, and sand-rises.

By comparison, the tents for which we now headed looked like palatial luxury—three of them, with sunshades outspread, and a couple of deft Arab servants who knew their business. He took me to his work-tent, complete with table and camp-chairs, and we settled down. I was surprised to find how early the morning still was; and the breeze we got here put Cairo's heat to shame. Nor was any sand blowing; the day was clear.

ALONG the line of these Mokattam hills, sand blows like a thousand devils at work; this is why the district has been an empty waste from time out of mind, afar from travel routes a bleak range of sand-blown hills overlooking the Nile valley. These hills and the savage mountains behind that run clear to the Red Sea were well known to the ancients, and sent rare stone and marble to adorn the palaces of Rome; but the wave of Arab conquest that destroyed everything in its path left them more nakedly desert than ever. Roman mines and marble quarries may still be found there, just as the workmen abandoned them.

"Now I'll give you the whole picture, Hawk." Keating slapped a dispatch-case on the table and opened it, spilling out papers, geodetic survey charts, notes and bits of papyrus in scrolls and fragments.

"About the year 1440 A.D.," he said, "the historian Al Makrizi wrote a history of the Arab conquest of Egypt; it is one of our main sources of information on the period. In it he mentions the fanatic Mahmud Saimed-Dahr, who hacked the features of the Sphinx to their present inept expression. He also tells how the invading Arabs found a second Great Sphinx in these hills, facing westward. The Bride of the Sphinx, they named it. Later, an emir of Sultan Ibn Kalaoun destroyed every vestige of it, seeking treasures."

He paused, got his pipe alight and resumed.

"I found these yarns in El Makrizi and believed them, and attempted to verify them, with no luck. The search became a mania with me. Then I bought from the Department of Antiquities, that oversees all the digs, this fragmentary papyrus." From the table he took the papyrus scroll and opened it. Fragmentary, yes, but silked and repaired with consummate skill.

"This," he went on, "came from the tomb of one Nefer, governor of the city of On, a highly important place in the days of Rameses the Great. They said it gave no particular information and was of negligible value. But I made my own translation."

"And struck pay dirt?" I asked.

He smiled. "It speaks of the Sphinx standing at the entrance to the hills called *karath Semes*—sacred to Semes.





Illustrated by Maurice Bower

A bullet whistled past . . . I was out; and then I just ran. . . .

These very hills. Semes, I take it, was a primitive deity. It, like the present Great Sphinx, was built by a King Ra-nefer-ses, one of the kings who ruled before known history began."

"Herodotus made no mention of a second Sphinx," I said.

"He didn't mention any Sphinx at all. Look it up."

"Well," I ventured, "I have always thought Cheops built it."

Smiling, Keating tapped the papyrus. "He built the Great Pyramid, Hawk. The Sphinx was there long before him, but he stole the credit and left his own name as builder—a bit of larceny common to all the Pharaohs. This papyrus speaks of the Sphinx that stood here, the second one, as ruined and forgotten. Probably it was completely covered by the sand, and later, when the Arabs came along, it had been uncovered. The temple probably still exists below us," he added, pointing to the sand around.

"And the papyrus proves that a second Sphinx did exist?" I asked.

"To me, yes, but not to others. Anciently, the present or eastward-facing Sphinx was called the temple of Horus, the rising sun; this one was the temple of Horus, the setting sun—it faced westward. Remember that translations of the hieroglyphics, like those of Chinese ideographs, may differ vastly. I'm afraid excavations must be made here before my theories are accepted. Want to visit the site?"

"Absolutely!"

"We've time to spare before our guests come," Keating glanced at his bony wrist. "Pop into the jeep, and I'll have you there in ten minutes. Did I mention that we have guests for tiffin? In order to get one, I had to invite two."

I could guess. "Linda and the Levantine?"

"Levantine!" He barked a jolly laugh. "Good name for the swine. He's thoroughly bad hat, I fear, but we preserve amicable relations. He's putting important money into her next production—they're sending a company out from Elstree to do an Egyptian picture—so she's being polite to him at the moment."

WE bundled into the jeep. Poor guy! The wool was neatly pulled over his eyes, I thought. Linda Grey was playing the millionaire for bigger stakes than a mere contribution to her cinema record, if I was any judge; and I wondered why she bothered dangling a nonentity like Keating on the string. The explanation was not long delayed.



"The trouble with you, Linda," I said, "is that you think your beauty is currency that no one can resist."

We were east and a bit south of Cairo, on the way to the Petrified Forest; presently the jeep bounced through deep loose sand around the shoulder of a wadi and halted. El Bakri was hidden from sight. The two minarets of the Cairo citadel-mosque pricked the sky, but the plateau and hills shut out the immense view of the Nile valley that could be had from the upper hills.

"The Great Sphinx is opposite, though we can't see him from here," Keating said. "The site of his Bride is thirty feet ahead of us, where those stones show: the two faced each other. It just happens that shifting sands have exposed some of the stones; no doubt the entire Sphinx was covered at times by sand. That might account for its having been forgotten in ancient days."

WE walked to where half-buried fragments of reddish limestone showed, wind-scooped out of the sand. A magnificent site for such an image, certainly, and well had the Arabs named it the Bride of the Sphinx. A few blocks of stone half emerging into sight—nothing else remained. Keating had found no inscriptions.

Yet he was quite jubilant. Actually he had proven nothing at all, but I

refrained from saying so. Only costly excavations would afford proof that another Great Sphinx had ever stood here. To get away from the unpleasant subject, I spoke of Linda Grey, since he had already mentioned her, asking if she were interested in the discovery.

"Not in the least, but she's mad about emeralds," Keating responded, "and chiefly about the Sphinx Emerald. She's read of it and has a sketch of the gem made by Leonardo da Vinci. It came, originally, from Cleopatra's emerald mines, somewhere back in these hills. They were worked ages before Cleopatra's time, of course. Linda is convinced that I know where the stone is."

"Why, have you some clue?"

He smiled ruefully. "Not a ghost of one. I just opened my mouth too wide. You know what damned fool things a man talks when he's in love. Bits of brag and boast and so forth. Also, when I was speaking of the Sphinx, she thought I meant the Sphinx Emerald, and got all lit up about it. I didn't have the good sense to undeceive her," he added.

"Talked yourself into a jam, have you?"

He nodded. "She and Malek both believe that I know where to put my

hand on the emerald, or have already located it. A sheer impossibility, of course. One thing led to another until Linda—well, she said that if I found the emerald for her, she'd take me with it. And she meant the words: she's wild about emeralds. Not very flattering, of course, but beggars can't be choosers, you know."

POOR devil—he was so infatuated that he had lost, if ever he'd possessed, all proper focus on the cinema star. I had read enough about Linda Grey—and my one glimpse of the gal had confirmed it—to know what an utterly beautiful, but selfish, heartless angel she really was; totally self-centered, if you like to put it that way. To her, Linda Grey was the only person in the world who mattered a tinker's dam.

When we got back to camp, it was still early. So, as Keating was bound for the village to haul some fresh water in the jeep, I went along. Those natives, said he, had inherited a genius for pottery-making; El Bakri pottery had been famous through many generations.

"So are their faked antiquities," he warned. "So watch your step."

We drove back to the village. Sure enough, every house had its quota of

pottery drying in the sun or stacked for sale. My romantic friend conjured up visions of Pierre Fabre and his companions making their last stand along the remains of the wall, and dying under the Mameluke sabers. Then he departed to the well with a couple of men to get his water supply, and I wandered about the place looking at the sights.

A HORDE of naked youngsters assailed me for baksheesh; whining females besought me to buy their wares. With much pretense of furtiveness, men brought out scarabs, beads, images and other "antiques"—dealing in real antiques was illegal. I was not having any of their fake bootleg relics; yet many of the things were cleverly done, and a great many of the sun-baked pottery bits looked really old. The stacks included everything from children's toys to glazed tiles.

"Veree old, veree old," droned a voice at my elbow. I turned to see a dirty-gowned old fellow holding a tray of imitation Mameluke lamps and other trumpery. But one small piece caught my eye for its very crudity. It represented a miniature pyramid, and seeing markings on the sides, I picked it up. Then, as I read the lettering that had been scratched in the soft clay before baking, my heart jumped.

"Veree old, efendi, real antica," droned the voice. "Made here long ago. Lucky charm, cheap, one pi-aster."

I handed over a piaster and pocketed the little pyramid, saying nothing to Keating about it till we were back at camp, where the two servants were preparing a sumptuous repast. We settled down to await the guests, and I produced the pyramid. Keating scoffed at my folly, until I began to read the scratches to him.

"*R. F. And VII*—seventh year of the French Republic, or 1798, eh? Here's the word '*moriturus*'—and here are initials and a name—*Fabre, P. M.*" And—"

"My good Lord! Let me see that thing," burst out Keating, reaching for it. "Pierre Marie Fabre—that was his name, sure enough. What the devil!"

"Veree old antica, made here long ago," I mimicked, wickedly amused by the excited interest. "Apparently this relic has been under your nose all the time, Sahib."

"Good God—look at these scratches! '*For Hector Duroc, Membre de l'Institut*'—that means the Institut d'Egypte, Bonaparte's little pet clique of savants! And this word '*moriturus*'—understand? We who are about to die—why, Hawkins, Fabre made this himself! It's been kicking around the damned village ever since!"

"So what?" I demanded.

He looked up sharply.

"He must have had a reason. Lying around, waiting for the end—taking a handful of clay, shaping it into a pyramid, scratching these things on it, putting it in the sun to dry—it may even have been fired. But why? Why?"

"And you an old soldier! Just to take his mind off his troubles and to leave some memento behind when the end came, of course!" I took the relic and was inspecting it when a car honked and the Isotta hove in sight. After that, we forgot the pyramid.

Linda Grey was quite gracious to me, deliciously *intime* with Keating, and the old charm was turned on full flow. I fancied a lurking mockery in her eye, and my suspicion was justified by Malek's oily manner. He showed no trace of surliness but chatted along eagerly, evincing keen interest in Keating's work and displaying a dazzling gold front tooth in constant smiles. So infinitely purring and agreeable was he, that it seemed obvious he was now perfectly sure of Linda and no longer regarded Keating as a serious rival. She must have got down to words of one syllable with him during the morning, I reflected cynically.

The luncheon was enjoyable. We were nearly through the meal when Linda mentioned cigarettes—a special Khedivial brand that she fancied, most expensive too. Keating announced that he had fetched a box especially for her and had left the package in the jeep. So, being on the off-tent side of the awning, I jumped up and went to get it. The jeep was behind the tents. I hurried to it, not without an angry thought about spoiled brats who were born to gaspers and now had to be served with Gippo brands made for royalty. Just as I came to the jeep, I turned my ankle in loose sand.

Thrown off balance, I was flung heavily against the car. My hip received a sharp bruise as something smashed in my coat pocket. Recovering, I thrust hand in pocket and swore in dismay. The miniature pyramid was now only a jumble of dust and clay particles.

Drawing out my fist, filled with the ruined handiwork of the late Pierre Fabre, I stared at the crumbled pieces. I looked again, made certain of what I had glimpsed, then hurriedly pocketed the debris. Seizing the package of cigarettes from the jeep, I strode back to the tents and, with an effort, calmly resumed my seat.

"But I say, old chap," Malek was saying in his oily way, "you promised to show us a real discovery if we ran out to tiffin! What's up, eh?"

Keating took the package, opened the tin of cigarettes, and placed them at Linda's elbow. He meant to show them the site of the other Sphinx, of course.

"Well," he began, "I've gone over the story with Hawkins, and—"

"The truth is," I cut in quickly, "he did have a big surprise to show all of us, but took it to a jeweler this morning to have it cleaned, and can't get it back until we return to Cairo later today. So we can't display it until tonight."

"A surprise?" repeated Linda, smiling at me, while Keating regarded me uncertainly. "Something he has discovered?"

"A real find," I assented. "Did you ever hear of a Lieutenant Fabre, who was killed here in Bonaparte's time—"

"Mr. Hawkins!" Linda fairly let out a whoop. "You can't mean—you're not talking about the Sphinx Emerald? It hasn't been found?"

"Oh, yes," I rejoined. "The Sahib, here, found it. You'll see it tonight if you wish."

The careless words certainly raised hell with all hands. Tom Keating was shocked and utterly aghast. Linda turned to him with a bubbly froth of excited questions, and the thing I saw unveiled in her eyes, the sharp cupidity and avid desire, was ugly. The dark features of Malek, however, became darker and flashed with sudden passion. I was amazed by the anger and suppressed fury aglow in his eyes. The active force of hatred, so vividly alive in the man, was startling to see.

KEATING was knocked off his pins by my words. He stammered desperately under Linda's fire of questions until I came to his rescue. I assured her that we really had the Sphinx Emerald in hand and said we would be glad to show her the stone that evening.

Malek intervened. "But we are going to the palace—King Farouk's reception, Linda! And you're to be guest of honor—"

"Bother the King's reception!" she cried. She was all on fire: the avid thing in her eyes was nakedly revealed. "That's unimportant—this is something wonderful! Oh, I know you went to a lot of trouble arranging it, James; I'm grateful, really—but this is greater than anything. What time can we get away from the palace?"

"Not before eleven," Malek said, sulky and lowering.

"All right! Sahib, where can we meet you then?"

"Wherever you say." Keating was not happy about it, and gave me a look that meant trouble. "You and Hawkins are both stopping at the Nile Palace—why not there?"

She clapped her hands. "Good! Good! We'll come right back there after the reception—meet in my suite at eleven-fifteen!"

It being thus settled, tongues clicked fast; she and Malek both wanting to hear about the discovery of the gem. On the plea that other parties must be

protected and we could not talk until certain arrangements were made, I promised them the full story that evening. This was no brilliant invention but it placated them; Malek, I perceived, had a deep interest in the emerald himself.

Our excited guests departed, and no sooner had the yellow Isotta got under way than Keating charged at me in a tumult of angry dismay.

"What in hell's name do you mean by it, Hawk? If this is your Yankee notion of a joke it's in deuced bad taste—"

FOR reply, I emptied my jacket pocket, dumping dust and clay fragments on the table. I stirred the pile with my finger while he looked; then, with a sharp exclamation, he swooped upon the green glitter that showed amid the dust.

"Go back to our friend Pierre M. Fabre," I said. "He knew the end was at hand, and therefore he made that little pyramid. Into the soft mud, completely hiding it, he pressed the emerald he had taken from the ring—then left the thing to dry. If he lived, he could some day regain the jewel. If not, he would keep the Arabs from getting it. He may have had further reasons, but—"

Right there, I think, a wild excitement gripped us both—for the miracle was a fact. It was true. I was looking at the jewel for the first time. Gems themselves have never meant a thing to me, but now the thrill of my own discovery was really something. I liked it.

Tom Keating produced a jeweler's glass, screwed it into his eye, examined the stone, and caught his breath. It was not a large emerald. It was a perfect cabochon the size of a small garden pea. The color was not deep, nor was the stone particularly handsome. And yet—

"My Lord!" said Keating in an awed voice.

"It's not the Sphinx emerald?" I asked. "Looks mighty small."

"Hold it up and look at it with, not against, the light," he said.

Almost reluctantly, he handed me the emerald and the lens; his face bore a rapt, ecstatic look.

One's first glimpse into the heart of an emerald, with such a glass, is memorable. Flashing glints, odd contours, strange shapes, appear; light itself assumes form and color; a pinpoint becomes a landscape of fantasy. With the stone in my palm, I found myself viewing green fields and precipices; then the enlarged flaws loomed up. I saw the Sphinx standing there, and the wonder grew.

The perfect Sphinx in profile, yes, lit by unearthly splendor of sunlight striking across the corundum structure—a beauty uncanny and magnificent.

More, the green depths suggested further things to the imagination, but I refused the tempting lure, because a sense of something repellent grew upon me.

Far from admiring the scene opening to me, I was inspired with acute dislike and even fear; why, I cannot say, but I felt a distinct repulsion that made me shiver.

"Isn't it the most marvelous thing you ever saw?" Keating demanded enthusiastically.

"No," I replied, and looked again to verify my feelings.

"Eh? What's wrong with your eyes, Hawk?"

"Nothing. The stone holds evil of some kind—that's the word for it—evil." I removed the glass and gave it back to him, with the stone. I felt a horror of it.

"You're in earnest?" He stared at me in surprise. "That's odd; but I told you it sparks the imagination. By all reports, no two people feel the same way about it. You damned lucky beggar! What'll you do with it?"

"Me? Not a thing. It's yours, not mine."

"I say, be sensible! I've nothing to do with the stone. It's your find."

As I looked at the shimmering green thing, I shivered again.

"The hell with it, Sahib! I wouldn't have it as a gift," I retorted. "You keep it. You're welcome to it. I tell you, the devil's in it! Somehow the very feel of it's like poison—ugh! I didn't see anything special in it, yet it filled me with horror, past any explanation. Keep it, throw it away, sell it, give it to Linda—anything you like. I never did have any feeling for jewels. They don't attract me, and this repels me."

"Here, now." From the tin of special cigarettes Keating jerked the rice-paper lining, spilling fat Egyptians all over the table. Putting the emerald on it, he twisted the paper into a knot and thrust it at me. "Take it. Keep it, look at it again and again. Take the glass too. If by tonight you don't change your mind, very well; put a price on it and I'll buy it from you. Good Lord, Hawk, don't you get my angle? I can't take advantage of a momentary whim on your part!"

"Don't you want it?" I demanded.

"Of course. More than you dream. But I want it fairly, honestly, not at your expense. The find was yours alone. It's an historic, wonderful stone. So do as I ask, for my sake. You mustn't tempt me."

I saw his point. With a nod of assent, I pocketed the paper twist.

"Very well. I'll not change my mind, so let's return to Cairo now and get it valued. After all, we may be kidding ourselves. May be just a piece of glass."

"Impossible. Anyhow, let's do it. I'm too excited to potter around here now."

He was all in a dither, certainly, and knowing the reason I did not wonder; but I did not mention Linda's name, or the thing I had seen in her eyes, or the hatred in the dark features of Malek. I was afraid and depressed. After my discovery-thrill had come reaction. There must be a curse of some kind on the stone, I told myself.

"I don't understand it at all," Keating said, while we were bouncing back on the city road, the citadel of Saladin looming against the sky ahead.

"Don't understand what?"

"The size of the emerald. It's only about three carats, I judge. Richelieu's will says it was five and a half. Da Vinci's account says it was eight. Earlier mentions make it much larger. Yet it must be the same stone. No two could have those identical flaws, that strange inner design and magnificent distance—"

"Probably it's been changed or recut in course of time," I suggested, and he nodded.

"Might explain it. There'll be trouble with Malek over this. He'll kick up a fat row if Linda— Well, never mind. He can't force me to sell it to him, anyhow."

So Malek wanted the stone—probably wanted to give it to Linda herself! However, we dropped the subject. Once in the city, we went directly to a jeweler Keating knew, in the Shari el-Manakh.

He gave the emerald a cursory examination and smiled.

"An Egyptian stone, I'd say. Poor color and oddly cut, with pronounced flaws. Its value? Merely nominal—a few hundred piasters. Yet there's something fascinating about the thing. Let me take another look—"

He once more bent over his bench with the gem, and Keating gave me a significant glance. This man, too, felt the weirdly compelling power of the stone, though obviously he had never heard of the Sphinx Emerald. Indeed, he asked to keep it until the morrow, saying he would like to make various tests, but Keating refused and we left the shop.

WE made plans for the rest of the afternoon. Keating, who had errands, promised to join me at the hotel for dinner, about seven.

"You do as I asked, now," he said earnestly, before we parted. "Don't go off half-cocked. Give the emerald a fair chance, examine it carefully, before coming to any decision."

"All right, Sahib," I promised. "See you tonight, then."

In my own room, after a cleanup, I sat down, put the glass in my eye, and resolved to examine the emerald with an impartial mind.

For a long while I searched the green depths, the curious light-filled valleys and hills of flawed corundum which surrounded that weirdly dominant sphinx-figure. Strange fancies drifted across my thought. The riddle of the Sphinx—was it not the mind of man, still an unsolved mystery? Hours of the sunrise, gazing eternally eastward, searching for his nameless Bride; the old primitive gods of the desert lands, spiritual forces of good and evil still at work; the strange ways of destiny that would entangle such a man as Keating with a heartless beauty like Linda Grey—such various threads of thought floated before me, with loose ends and no tieup.

But the longer I looked, the more surely returned upon me that same causeless horror and repulsion. This Sphinx among the ghostly green hills had an ethereal beauty, yes, but also conveyed a sense of intolerable depression—a nameless sadness and even loathing. Why? Impossible to say. Just a mental quirk; something wrong with me, perhaps, since others did not get the same feeling from it. Perhaps some premonition or foreboding. At all events, I laid aside the glass almost with hatred, returned the emerald to its twist of paper, and resolved definitely to be rid of it the moment Keating appeared. I was afraid of it.

SIX o'clock passed, seven came and went; day darkened into night—and no Keating showed up. My watch-hands crept on, and I was hungry. When the phone rang, I jumped for it hastily. A strange voice spoke, with faint accent.

"Mr. Hawkins, sar?"

"Yes."

"I am speaking for Keating Effendi, sar. I am Inspector Ayub Hassan of the Salt Department and live in the El Faggala quarter. Mr. Keating was slightly hurt in a street accident this evening and was brought into my house. He asked me to come here and get you. I have engaged a car and am now downstairs."

"Down in two minutes," I replied, and moved fast, spurred by alarm.

Inspector Hassan was a swarthy, suave Gippo who, as soon as we met, hurried me out to the street. He said that Keating had merely been hit by a car and knocked about slightly and was not badly injured. Before I knew it he was handing me into a smelly little Citroën, himself got under the wheel and was sending the outsize bathtub dashing forth into the night life of Cairo like an insane doodlebug.

I had not the slightest idea of where we were when my driver halted before a narrow crooked house in a crooked narrow street and said we had arrived. We piled out and the Inspector led me through a gate that opened on the street. This took us into a walled and

tilted patio. On the left, stairs ascended to balconies above. Before us, orange trees grouped about a tiled fountain and paper lanterns bobbed on invisible wires. My guide vanished, and to my amazement James Malek came forward with a suave greeting. He was in evening attire and wore the ribbon of some decoration across his shirt-front.

"Good evening, Mr. Hawkins," he said, showing his gold front tooth. "I am glad to—"

"Where's Keating?" I broke in.

He looked astonished.

"Keating? How should I know?"

"But he's here—he's hurt—that's why I came! Here, Inspector—"

I turned, but there was no Inspector. I was alone with Malek, who smiled and rubbed his plump hands.

"Some mistake, what?" he said.

"An odd sort of cove, Keating. He'd scarcely be here; the neighborhood is a very bad one. And now, please, the emerald. I have no desire to rob you, so name your price and there will be no trouble."

He produced a fat wad of white Bank of England notes and began to thumb them.

"You're out of soundings, Malek," I said, a trifle bewildered. "I came to get Keating. The emerald is not for sale."

"It is you who are in error, my dear sir," he rejoined pleasantly. "As they say in Chicago, give, and give fast. Come through. The emerald, and at your price!"

By this time the sense of his words, his meaning, had reached my dumb brain. I was slow to realize the fact, but I was in a jam, a bad one. I had been decoyed here by this smirking Levantine, who wanted the emerald, one way or another.

"No use," I said, thinking fast for a change. "Keating has it."

"There's no green in my eye, old chap." He lost his smile and looked ugly. "We've tried him already, so give! Loosen up, and quick about it! Here, Abdul! Yacub!"

To put it flatly, I was now scared stiff. This Gippo version of Al Capone had me on the spot. When, at his call, shadowy figures moved on the far side of the orange trees, I acted not as a hero but in sheer blind panic. He was still calling them when I slid forward on the tiles and sunk my fist into Malek's bulging cummerbund, then whirled and ducked for the gateway and the street.

A tarbooshed figure blocked my way with a mean-looking knife a foot long, but I was too frightened to take the hint and stop. So I just put down my head, butted him, a trick taught me by a disreputable pal in the tanks. He went flat and I went at the gate. A pistol barked, a bullet whistled past, and Yacub and Abdul were on my

heels as I got the gate open. It slammed in their faces—I was out on the cobbles; and then I just ran like hell.

VAGUELY I remember excited Arabs, jabbering Gippos, tumultuous bazaars, kilted Scotch soldiers, and finally a room in a palatial police station. A polite, friendly official in evening dress heard my story, gave me a highball and a six-inch cigarette, and finally escorted me to my hotel room. "Here he sat down to the telephone to get reports on the matter. He talked on the phone, made some notes, and turned to me.

"My dear Mr. Hawkins, I have very sad news for you," he said, with tears in his voice. "Your friend Keating Effendi, who is of course very well known, was taken from the river near the Bulak bridge half an hour ago, drowned."

"Then it's that damned Malek fellow!" I cried furiously. "He boasted to me that he had tried to rob Keating—I want him arrested at once!"

"Malek Effendi is an important man, a man of position. Let me look into it a bit," he replied, and began to jabber into the phone anew.

The shock hit me all of a sudden with numbing force—dead! Sahib Keating dead! He had been murdered when the emerald was not found on him—murdered for the damned stone, by Malek! I was getting the impact of this when my good friend the official turned from the phone again and lit one of his long cigarettes. He shook his head sadly.

"My dear sir, I cannot comprehend this murder charge, or your story of assault," he said kindly, in tones of deepest sympathy. "I have just established that Malek Effendi is now present at a reception at the palace and has been there all evening, a guest of His Majesty. Allow me to observe, Mr. Hawkins, with the greatest respect, that it is inadvisable to visit places where hashish is used—"

Well, at least I did not fly into a rage and make an utter ass of myself; we talked on, calmly. Poor Keating was dead, robbed and dropped into the river. Malek had a regal alibi, and was too respected a gentleman to be mixed up in such a crime anyway. There was no Inspector Hassan in the Salt Department, nor did any such person live in the El Faggala quarter. No one here at the hotel remembered him calling for me, either. No house, such as I described, with patio and orange trees, was known.

Yes, I got it all right, and took it standing up. It was after ten o'clock when my sympathetic and friendly police official gently patted my hand, warned me again about the delusions caused by hashish, and bowed himself out. Ferash Bey, I think his name was.

I sat down, held my head in my hands, and after a time glimpsed the twist of paper holding the emerald, on the writing-desk where I had left it. When I thought of Tom Keating my heart burned. I cursed that bit of green corundum most heartily; then I pocketed it and the lens, brushed up a trifle, and left the room. It was a little after eleven when I reached the hotel desk and inquired whether Miss Grey had returned. She had not.

I went out on the wide veranda and waited. The hotel was a postwar luxury spot, converted from a Mame-luke palace. Instead of having gardens on the river side, one wing was actually over the water when, as now, the river was at the yearly flood.

WHAT I awaited was vague; I had no particular intentions—just that deep heartburn. I had no particular animus against Malek. He was merely a Gippo halfcaste and had acted according to his nature. Linda Grey was the real murderer of Tom Keating.

My second cigarette was nearly finished when the yellow Isotta swept up to the steps. Malek accompanied Linda in, then departed at once and hastily. I left my chair and stepped in, and joined Linda at the desk. She turned to me in surprise.

"You didn't expect the rendezvous to be kept?" I said.

"I was told Sahib had left town," she rejoined, "but I'm delighted to see you, of course."

"You may well be. I've brought what you want to see. Malek couldn't get it."

She laughed. Her eyes glittered. Suddenly she was all life and animation, and swept me along to the lift with her. She knew the truth and did not care a hang. She would welcome me or Malek or anyone who brought her the Sphinx Emerald, and there would be no question of price. This was clear enough from her abrupt intimacy of manner. She put all her beauty at my disposal, and that short ascent in the lift was a passionate interlude of promise that could not be mistaken.

Her maid admitted us to her suite. Linda shed her wonderful wraps and dismissed the maid, then led me out to the balcony. It was a sweet place, directly over the river, unscreened but luxuriously furnished; the night air was cool, redolent of gardens.

Linda was ablaze with jewels. It seemed absurd that a woman wearing the gems of queens would care tuppence about the bit of green corundum in my pocket; yet there was avid expectancy in her manner, in her look, as we settled down. I sat at a small table close to the iron grille at the edge of the balcony; in the center of the table stood a lamp. I switched it on; its light was shaded but brilliant.

"Well?" she demanded without pretense.

"Better sit here where you can examine it," I said. I made no pretense either and she had to bring up her own chair to the table, opposite me.

I put the jeweler's glass before her, got out the twist of paper, and set the emerald in her palm. Then I sat back, watching her with relish.

Glass in eye, she looked into the emerald, caught her breath, then began to examine it with rapt attention. She continued to look for a long time, shifting the stone about to get different lights upon it. At last a deep, slow breath escaped her, she took the glass from her eye and set it down, and put the emerald beside it. Then she sat silently, staring down at the stone.

Her lovely features were suffused with emotion, her eyes soft and liquid; she was so deeply stirred that she quite forgot she was Linda Grey. All her heart was plain to see. When at length she spoke, the words were almost a gasp.

"Exquisite! There's nothing in the world like it. It does things to you—it speaks to the very soul!" she murmured. Indeed, she had never looked so beautiful, so abandoned to a sheer ecstasy. "Why, it's incredible! All the stories about it, even the wildest

ones, are not half the truth; it simply takes possession of you!"

"Glad you feel that way about it; I don't, but I'm exceptional," I said coldly. "So you like it?"

"Like it?" She loosed her pent breath. "I adore it! I must have it. I can't live without it, now that I've seen it. It's wonderful—above words! No, I just couldn't live without it."

"You'd be surprised," I said, and got out a cigarette and lit it. As I laid down the match she put out her hand and set it on mine. Her voice came like a chord of soft music.

"And you've brought it to me?"

"No. Keating would have brought it to you. I just brought it to show to you."

She laughed amusedly, richly, but her eyes lost some of their rapt ecstasy.

"You're delightful! Well, tell me what you want for it."

"All right, let's talk business," I said, "and in plain words, no sparring. What did you promise Keating for it, if he got it for you?"

"Anything," she said simply, quietly, without evasion.

"And you promised Malek the same thing. You'd pay me the same thing. Anything. Whatever I asked."

"Yes," she breathed, her eyes on mine.

"The trouble with you, Linda," I said, "is that you think your beauty is currency that no one can resist. You're wrong. Give me what I ask, and the emerald is yours."

"Done. Name it."

"The life of Tom Keating."

She straightened up a trifle, with a shocked expression.

I went on coolly:

"He's dead. You know it. Your boy friend did for him, but you actually killed him—you and your playing around, juggling life and death and devotion. That's why I'm here. That's why I brought the stone. And you want it so badly you'd give anything for it."

"I don't know why you're talking this way," she began.

"You'll know in a minute. Hold out your hand, darling."

PERPLEXED, uncomprehending, she stretched out her hand to me. I turned it palm up, picked up the emerald, and set it on her pink palm. It looked very lovely there. Then I caught back my second finger with my thumb, and, as one flicks away a cigarette stub, flicked the emerald from her hand—out over the balcony rail, out into the darkness and the river below us.

A cry of actual agony escaped her. Then she sat stupefied, trying to realize what had happened. I rose and bowed to her.

"Good night, beautiful; pleasant dreams," I said, and left her.

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Good-bye, Georgie!

His last game was his best one—on the field and off it.

by WILLIAM R. COX

HEL-LO, THERE," Georgie said. "I musta been asleep." He stood with his legs spread, but not moving, because if he moved, he might fall on his fat face. Someone had called time out, and the other members of the Lodi Braves were staring curiously at him. They were smallish, wide boys, young and with foreign-sounding names. They could pay only a double sawbuck even to a name like Georgie Parr for this Sunday semi-pro game.

But they expected service, Georgie thought. They had a right to something. The Passaic Red Devils were their great rivals, and they had hired Georgie to clinch a victory, and they wanted it very bad.

The timekeeper was getting ready to start the game again. Georgie tried to think. His brains were pretty well scrambled. It was the beer, he supposed. He should have taken it easy last night, instead of sitting up, fanning with old Potsy in that Lodi bar. Potsy had brought him over, and cutting up old touches was natural as paint to a couple of old-time heroes. Potsy was plenty old—a year older than Georgie. . . .

But Potsy had never been as tough as Georgie—as who had? Georgie was well past thirty, a war under his belt, and still going.

Not going too well, he corrected. The time was called in. The Lodi Braves gathered, and one of them said

earnestly: "Geez, Georgie, can you take it off the tackle?"

"Sure," said Georgie. "What down is it?"

The quarterback said sadly: "Fourth and four, on their twenty. We gotta get this score to tie 'em, even. There's on'y a minute to play, Georgie."

"Lemme have it," said Georgie. He had not bothered with signals. This was bush league, for twenty and the fare. He was Georgie Parr, he had been All America. . . .

The resolute Braves lined up. The formation was single wing, right. Georgie took it in the slot, a nice center pass into his belly.

He wasn't fat. Just a bit thick through the middle. He weighed only

*Illustrated by
John McDermott*



*"... Good-by,
Georgie." The ring
fell to the tabletop.
He kept his head
down as she walked
out.*

210. He had played football for eighteen years. He knew everything.

He saw the Red Devil line hold tight, waiting for him. There was a small hole as a gallant Brave guard lunged. He put down his head and drove for the hole.

He got to it. But it was closed. There were tacklers waiting, because he had not got in there quick enough. He dived and churned with his long, heavy legs. His spikes ate turf, hard turf on this skinned field. Men were slugging at him, clawing at him. He grunted and hunched his powerful shoulders and heaved.

A whistle blew. A gun went off. He was still upright, but there were red jerseys all about him, hemming

him in. He was Gulliver bound by the Lilliputians. He was Prometheus bound. . . .

Two years ago he would have been into that hole and away. He would have shucked the Red Devils like ears of corn at a husking. He would have scored and tied up the game and saved the bruised hearts of his employers. Two years ago—

Georgie said: "Sorry, kids. Just couldn't make it." No alibis. He never got that low. He had played a lousy game, and he knew it, and they knew it. He walked off the field, past the jeering Red Devils and into the bus. He rode down to the hotel with the silent Braves and got off, and his knees shook as he went up the stairs

to his room without bath. He changed and showered and came down, and Potsy was waiting.

Potsy said: "Here's the twenty, pal. You oughta quit. . . . How's Helen these days, Georgie?"

"You have just touched the details of my life today," said Georgie. "Thanks for the dough. I oughta quit. Helen's fine. So long, Potsy."

"Good-by, Georgie," said Potsy quietly.

HELEN TORREY sat with Paul Hendershot—Big Shot Hendershot—in the second booth at Tim Costello's bar on Third Avenue. She was a tall girl, dark and slim, with large brown eyes which had seen many things and

had understood them with patient kindness. Georgie came in and sat down across from the two.

Hendershot was as big as Georgie, and stouter. He was handsome in an impatient, flashy style, and his speech was clipped, assured. He said: "Barnstorming again, Georgie? Getting your brains knocked out for nothing?"

"Hiya, Helen?" said Georgie. "You look beautiful. . . . Paul, your solicitude is touching. . . . You got me that job with the Mastodons, pal? You goin' to have me coachin' for your club?"

Hendershot said: "I don't own the Mastodons. I had sense enough to quit playing and get into the business end, but I don't own the club."

"You made a pile, though," said Georgie. "You bought stock in the Mastodons. You got influence like mad. Helen and I could get married on that coachin' job, pal."

PAUL stared at the placid face of the big man he had known—and failed ever to understand—for twenty years. They had grown up together; they had been rivals on the field throughout many seasons of football. Hendershot had been a great back—but never as great as Georgie. He had been far cleverer in arranging his life—he had indeed made money betting shrewdly on pro games, and had invested it wisely. He was hugely successful; he was vice-president of the Mastodons, secretary of various other companies in the amusement world. Helen was his secretary. He was a young man who had conquered the world. But he had never understood Georgie—nor why Helen Torrey remained engaged to the big fullback with the ingenuous blue eyes and the high, scarred cheekbones, and the brain which seemed childishly composed of toy footballs. . . .

Hendershot said: "If I could manage it, you'd be head coach. But Steve Bellows—you know Steve."

"Head coach of the Mastodons," said Georgie, as if none of them knew that patent fact. "I beat out his brains many's the time."

"He's got his own ideas," said Hendershot heavily. "I don't own the club, you know."

Georgie said: "You told me, pal. You are my pal, aren't you, Paul?"

"I'm your oldest friend," said Hendershot stiffly. "We've been through plenty together. You know what I think of you."

"Sure," said Georgie. "I know." He grinned, and ordered a sirloin steak and beer. Two beers, he qualified, confiding in his companions: "It is very thirst-provoking in Jersey. A great little State, Jersey."

Helen Torrey spoke for the first time. "You had a bad day, Georgie."

"Well—it wasn't a good day," he said cautiously. "But I can buy your steak. Paul's, too."

"This is on me," said Hendershot, not without a touch of grandeur.

Georgie said placidly: "All right. On you."

"But I have to go now," said Hendershot, consulting a two-hundred-dollar strap watch. "Steve wants something or other. . . . I'll talk to him some more about you, Georgie. I wish I could get you that job."

He took Helen's hand as he left, a gesture which seemed rather unnecessary in view of the fact that he would see her the following morning at her desk in his office. He bowed over it, smiling into her eyes. He left, walking grandly to the bar, and leaving a bill without waiting for change.

Georgie said: "My pal. . . . He loves me."

Helen said: "You *did* have a bad day."

"Yeah," said Georgie. "To you I can say it. I'm washed up. My legs are gone. I can't last more'n a quarter." The blue eyes were not bitter. They were very sad, but they looked straight at her. "Baby, I've blown it, haven't I? My legs—my dough—spent them, huh? A fast guy with a leg, a fast guy with a buck."

She said: "Paul did speak to Steve. I heard him."

"I could maybe coach a high school. Take you to Jersey and live in a dinky apartment and sweat it out. Four thousand a year." Georgie cut his steak. It was a noble steak, and the beer was cold from clean pipes, like always in Tim's. He shook his head. "No. I couldn't. Not because of you. Because of me. I'd spend too

much; I always spent too much. I'm a Happy Charley, no good for you."

She said: "You haven't lost your appetite, though."

"I bleed without showin' it," said Georgie. The steak didn't seem to taste well. He stolidly chewed it, cut some more. "Paul's nuts about you, baby."

The girl said: "You're trying awful hard, aren't you, Georgie?"

"Well—marriage ain't for me," he said. "You're too swell, baby. I'm just a bum. I think I'll go West. They pay more out there. And this new crowd on the Cardinals—they're looking for a coach." He valorously ate his steak and quaffed the light brew.

She said: "You're a great Georgie." She got up, and he was scared to look at her. "All right, Georgie. You do what you have to do. . . . Good-by, Georgie." The ring fell to the table top. He kept his head down as she walked out, her long pretty legs steady, her hips swinging the way they did.

He finished the steak and the beer, and had the second beer and then another. He picked up the ring and looked at it. In those days he had been flush. He had won a parlay and had paid a couple thousand for the rock. The setting was custom made, old-fashioned basket type. He tucked it into his watch pocket. He could get anyway a thousand for it in hock, he thought, the way diamonds had gone up.

WITH her finger on the switch of the two-way inter-office communicating system, Helen hesitated. Steve Bellows was inside with Paul Hendershot, and she knew the importance of the conference. She shook her brown head, sighed and pushed the button, turning the volume low, leaning to the speaker.

Bellows' heavy voice said: "You're the real voice in this, Paul. You're front office and football. You can understand that with Solo sick, we got to have a brain."

Hendershot said: "You're sure about Solowski? There's Ankers and Bullock behind him. . . . You sure Solo can't play against the Bruins?"

"The doc says no. We got to have a brain. Ankers and Bullock are okay, but you know like I do that the Bruins beat us before and can do it again unless we got a football brain in there. I mean a real one."

Hendershot said: "I don't know what to say, Steve. . . . I don't own the club, of course."

"You might as well," said Bellows—a bit grimly, Helen thought. "They leave the decisions on hiring and firing to you."

Helen gently turned off the switch. She arose and took her notebook. She went to the door of the inner



"I'll be all right. I'll scrimmage with the scrubs."

office and tapped. Then she opened it and went in. She said: "That letter to the equipment outfit. . . . It must get out in the next mail."

Hendershot said: "Yes. . . . That's right." He smiled at her, showing his teeth, very white and even. His eyes went over her, as usual, lingered on her left hand. He said: "Steve and I are awful busy—" He gulped, stammering, staring. "Er—yes. . . . What was I saying? Er—Steve, I'll think about this. Yes. . . . You want a player. . . . I'll get you one. You can depend on me, Steve." He was ushering the big coach out.

Steve said: "If you don't turn me up someone, the Bruins'll murder us. They got Butch Beale and Elly Grogan; they got football brains. It's a thing you know about, Paul. You been in there." He went out.

The door closed. Hendershot's hands were shaking. He said: "Helen. You're not—you're not wearing Georgie's ring."

"No," she said. "I returned it."

He said: "Helen—darling. I've never said anything, all these years. On account of Georgie. But now—"

She said: "I gave him back the ring. But I'm not sure I was right."

Paul Hendershot was an astute man. He gripped a letter-opener and said quietly: "I understand, my dear. After all this time. . . . But I want you to know how I feel."

She said: "What was Steve saying about football brains and needing a player? Is someone hurt?"

"Solo Solowski," said Hendershot. "It's a problem."

Helen said: "Paul—what about Georgie?"

He took a deep breath, sitting behind his big desk. His mind went to the situation and gripped it. The devious angles were apparent to him, because his mind was devious and clever. He said slowly: "Georgie is old and worn, in a football sense."

SHE said: "But smart on the field. Very smart. . . . I have a feeling Georgie is at the turning-point in his life. He has wasted himself; he has enjoyed a good time; he has lingered overlong at the game. If he goes down now, maybe Georgie will never get up—and he is near to going down."

Hendershot said: "Yes. I know you are right."

She said: "Is there anyone else you could get?"

"No," said Hendershot. "Not anyone. Not this late in the season."

She said: "You'll do it? You'll give him a chance? He's been your friend for a long time, now."

Hendershot said: "Helen, you may have something there." He weighed the importance of it. He knew Steve was an alarmist. He had thought, all the while Steve was talking, that An-



She said: "Thank you, Paul. This will make

kers and Bullock could handle the fullback job, and do it well enough. For deep down, in his football mind, he did not believe that with Solowski or anyone else the Mastodons could lick the puissant Bruins.

His business sense perked up its head and told him that he could get Georgie cheap, that Steve would be satisfied, that his own skirts would be clear. He knew what would happen. He knew about Georgie. He knew about the legs, all gone, about the beer which had gone to Georgie's middle, at least to some extent. . . .

He said: "Helen, we'll do it. Georgie shall have his chance. And Helen, dear, please remember what I said. If you and Georgie are really through—" He fought for control and got it. "Well, I've waited for years. He smiled crookedly, plaintively. "I can wait a little longer."

She said: "Thank you, Paul. This will make or break Georgie—but he has to have his chance."

"He shall have it." Hendershot arose. He was very tall, and the gray at his temples was becoming in the slanting sunlight seeping between the Venetian blinds of the fine office. . . .

Steve Bellows said: "I dunno. You're pretty well shot. But we got two weeks."

"I'll be all right. Gimme the plays. On paper. I'll scrimmage with the scrubs." Georgie laughed. "This is great. Butch Beale, Elly Grogan, Popper Grimm, Angel Bocalli—and those defensive backs. . . . And that line. So Paul hires me to stop the Bruins."

"It was good publicity," said Steve doubtfully. "Ankers and Bullock are good boys. They'll be in there."

"Are you kiddin' me?" Georgie turned a football in his big hands. "You want to win, Steve. You're that kind. You know how good the Bruins are. You know your club is just average. But you want a miracle. And you know I just haven't got any miracles."

Steve said: "Paul gave you to me. I'm game if you are."

"That's good enough for me," said Georgie. He went out on the field, wearing the solid blue jersey with the arm stripes of white. He was a Mastodon again.

He had been a Mastodon before. Two Eastern championships and one world title. Three All-Star games.



or break Georgie—but he has to have his chance.”

The pros didn't lose the All-Star games in those days. Hendershot had played then, and Potsy.

Now it was Bill Crane at quarter, slippery Sam Levine to run, Happy McGee to block, all youngsters, all ginger and speed. And Georgie Parr to play fullback and keep them steady. How many minutes must he play? He laughed again, but out of the corner of his big mouth.

CRANE came to him and said: "Let's run through some plays." He was a nice young blond, wide-shouldered, serious.

Georgie said: "Thanks, kid. But I need work. I'll go with the scrubs awhile. We got two weeks."

Crane said: "It's fine to have you, Georgie." He almost meant it, too, he was such a nice kid.

Georgie went over to where the reserves were working with a bunch of sand-lotters and free agents in the pro ranks—an innovation of Steve's to provide future talent. Scat Delavan was running the show, and quarterbacking the reserves. Scat had been around a long time too. He said: "Hello, hero. How are the gams?"

"Rotten," said Georgie. "Let's go to work."

"You can't rebuild 'em," said Scat without rancor. "When they're gone, they are finished."

Georgie said: "You're so right, pal. But I'm bein' paid. Good dough."

He had pulled one there. He had made Paul pay, when he had seen that Paul wanted him. He still did not understand why Paul had given him the chance. That was a thing he had to think over. But he had recognized Paul's eagerness, and had made the club pay him an even one thousand to sign. That made two thousand dollars. . . .

Now all he had to do was bet the two grand where it would win. He had already talked to Potsy over in Jersey. The minor league was forming up fine, with the Braves and the Red Devils, natural enemies, and Patterson and Newark, a new circuit, scrappy, bush league, but with a ready-made public which had been following the sand-lotters for years. Nothing big, but a good, solid little deal. They needed capital, and Georgie would be President of the League if he could get it up.

"From rags to comparative riches," he told himself. He took his place at fullback. Scat was using the Mastodon regular plays. It was the old system with modern variations. It was simple for Georgie to learn.

Getting into the plays was another matter. He was so stiff at night that he went home and lay about through dinnertime, the first few days. He lost ten pounds.

Then he began to eat with a fine appetite, only one beer. He would never get the legs back, but his mind was clear, and he felt good. He finished the first week with the scrubs, and went up to the first team and walked through the formations without pads. But at night he went about all the way from the field home to his hotel, walking a block, running a block on the hard pavement.

He did not see Helen. It wouldn't be fair, he thought. He had never really been fair to her. He had taken her for granted. Not until the bitter end, over in Jersey, had he awakened to that.

She had to have her chance with Paul. The Big Shot would always be successful. He was clever: he was ruthless in business; but he was not a bad joe, Georgie thought. Paul had come through with this chance for him.

GEORGIE slept hard. He was too old; he was too slow, but he determined not to be too weary, on that Sunday fast approaching.

The Mastodons always drew, and against the Bruins they drew fifty-five thousand people, which is a lot of folks to be gathered together on a November afternoon in a ball park. The air was full of football, and Georgie's nose knew it. He came out of the dressing-room and started down onto the field, a little behind the others of the squad. Steve stopped him and said: "Like you say, Georgie, I want to win. There's one thing I'd like to know. Are you in this for that thousand bucks, or for beatin' the Bruins?"

Georgie said: "What do you think, Steve?"

"I heard about that Jersey deal. I heard you hocked a ring," said the coach. "You never say much, Georgie. You don't talk it up much."

"No," said Georgie. "I ain't one for talkin' it up."

"I'd like to know."

"Mebbe I can't say. I'm here; the club is payin' me plenty." Georgie's eyes were deeper blue, staring at Steve. "You're the boss. You use me the way you want."

Steve went off without saying any more. Georgie started past the edge of the left field bleachers, toward the field. He saw Helen and stopped.

She said: "Hello, Georgie."

"Hello, baby," he grinned. The corners of his mouth felt tight.

"I wanted to wish you luck. Like always."

"Sure. Sure, baby."

They looked at one another, at the familiar lines of each other. There were a thousand things remembered between them, through the years.

She said: "It's a big day, George."

"Not so big as it could be," he said. "I got an out. I don't have to do or die for dear old Hendershot."

She said: "I've heard. Over in Jersey?"

"How things get around?"

"You needed four thousand. You only had two. One from my ring. One from Paul."

"I'll have four grand tonight," he told her. "I can't get the ring back right now. But I'm goin' to send it to you some day."

"I see. . . . You're going to send it to me."

"For a gift. A free gift." He looked into her brown eyes. "I hear things too. I hear you and Paul—you're like that."

"You heard that." She inhaled, her breast rising beneath the stuff of the dress under the fur coat. "Maybe it is a bigger day than you think, George. Maybe. You'd better puzzle that out. You're not stupid, George. You've been a gay kid, and all that, but you're not stupid."

He said: "I don't quite get you—"

"Good luck, George!" She turned and walked away, and his heart went dry and withered, and his hands clenched into fists; but he had work to do and maybe it was a big day.

ANKERS started at fullback. The Bruins looked fine. They were the best football team in the world, with two complete backfields, one on defense led by Dooley and Ferry, the other attacking with the brilliance of Grogan and Grimm and Beale to spearhead them. They had linesmen by the dozen, large gentlemen from This and That School of Mines, from Crawling on the Missouri, never an All-America in the line, just big guys with names ending in "ski"—the best footballers in the world.

Grogan kept working a short spinner from the single wing, then going into the double wing and harrying the tackles. This was the first quarter. The Bruins scored once.

On the bench George watched, saying nothing, his eyes intent on the action. In the second quarter Sam Levine ran a kick back to midfield and Steve said: "All right, George."

He put on the helmet, and his fingers shook a little. Two thousand and two thousand make four thousand; and Helen was right—he was not that stupid. He went onto the field, and Ankers came off. Bill Crane was eager and young. He looked questioningly at George, got no satisfaction, and

called for a reverse with George carrying.

"Signals off," said George calmly. "Use Sam."

Crane gulped, but changed the signals. The Mastodons shifted, hepped, and the ball went to Levine. George took two steps right, then switched inside, charging. Levine, a step behind him, followed like a marionette.

The line was split. Ferry and Dooley came in from the wings. George picked up Ferry on his wide shoulders and bunched him into Dooley. Sam ran away and got thirty yards.

Crane gave George a look and said: "Give them 92."

George went into the slot. The ball came slanting to him as he bucked over center. He turned, shoveling back a toss at Happy McGee, the blocker who rarely carried. The Bruins had over-shifted. Happy went to the ten-yard line, where Dooley caught him from behind.

The Bruins were growling, menacing. George whispered: "The end-around."

Crane called it. He faked to George, faked to Happy. Ed Fortune came around from end and snatched the ball, the oldest play in history. Out on the wing, George and Crane blocked out Ferry. Fortune scored.

George looked at the bench. Steve was sitting down, legs spread, relaxed. Bullock should be coming in, but there was no Bullock. George scowled.

The Mastodons kicked off, and the Bruins started coming again. George backed up the line with Augie Lotz, the center.

It was rough work. They kept coming through. Elly Grogan and Beale carried, and they kept slugging the center of the Mastodon line. They would chop through; and then Augie or George—or both—would be there and stop them, if they could.

It was a relentless advance. Grogan did not even attempt a pass, so confident was he of the ground attack. The Bruins worked like a multiple-legged machine, their coherence magnificent, chewing off the yards. And George was down under every play.

He looked at the clock. There was a minute left in the half. His legs were numb. His back ached, and his nose bled. The Bruins were not careful with elbows and the edges of their hard hands. He looked at the bench. Steve had not changed position.

He looked at the owner's box. Paul Hendershot sat there, with Helen and the other owners. They all looked pretty comfortable.

The Bruins came again. He saw them coming, and at the last possible moment he saw the play and knew the play. It was not his. He could rest a moment, perfunctorily plugging a hole in the line, getting a precious bit of

surcease from the pulverizing work. It was a pass—it was going deep into the end zone—

He turned and ran. He took long strides, wabbling a bit in his football player's manner of running. He saw Bill Crane's set white young face, and went on. He saw Grogan setting for the catch. He took off, leaping higher than he thought his old legs would allow him to go. He batted with his palm, his arm describing a short, businesslike arc. The ball spatted nice, and went away off the field.

The half ended. The score was all tied up. He was very happy that they were at the clubhouse end of the field, and that he did not have to walk far to a place where he could lie down.

TOWARD the end Steve took him out. He lay on the grass and said indignantly: "Where's Bullock? Ankers plays five minutes. I die out there. No Bullock."

"I liked you in there," said Steve. It was fourteen to fourteen, now. The Bruins were lining up for a field goal. It was from the thirty-five, which showed the Bruins were no longer overconfident. Angel Bocalli was measuring it. George did not even look. Steve said quietly: "They made it. Go back in there, George."

"I'm through. I'm bushed. Use Bullock. He's young and full of it." "I know what he's full of. Go in there."

"It's no good, Steve. I've given it to you." George got up. His fingers seemed thick and useless. He stared at his feet, which were a long way off, somehow.

"Sure," said Steve. "Go on. I couldn't hold you out if I tried."

George looked at the owner's box. Helen's face was white. She could see the smear where he had wiped off the blood. She could see the twist to his nose. It had been a rough day, all right. He turned and limped onto the field.

Somewhere there was strength to move through the old familiar motions. Bill Crane's pinched white face swam before him. Bill said: "We're on their thirty. I don't know how, but we are. First down, George. First down."

George said dreamily: "I'll carry." This was crazy stuff. He took the ball, and beat in between the guards, the fine Bruin guards whose names ended in "ski." He got four yards.

Bill Crane said: "George, can I throw one?"

"I'll take it," he said.

Crane called the fast reverse. It depended upon timing and a sharp lurch, then some running. The timing was imbedded into George's soul; that was the football brain, the big part of it, knowing when and where and what and doing it in rhythm.

The gallant Mastodons opened a little hole. Georgie went into it. He viciously straight-armed Ferry, and there was a clear field. But he could not run.

It was like a nightmare, trying to run. He felt someone catching him and tried to crisscross, but his feet got tangled. He went down. It was terrible, but there it was. He couldn't do it.

Bill Crane was begging: "All through, Georgie, all the way. Give it to me, Georgie, like you've been giving them to me. You're great, Georgie, you're plain damn' great!"

Georgie said, from far away: "I'm dead. . . . What down?"

"First, Georgie. On their fifteen. You made it."

Georgie said: "Sam. . . . Give it to Sam."

Bill Crane called the fakeroo, pretending to hand-off to Georgie. That meant running, with huge realism, bent over an imaginary ball. Georgie did not think it would have fooled the Red Devils, but he had to go.

Sam ran to the one-yard line. The Bruins took time out. Georgie lay on the ground, then quickly got up, because if he stayed down, he would be unable to rise in a moment or two. In his ear, Bill Crane said: "The one we've saved, Georgie? Should I use it?"

Georgie said: "Kid, you're the quarterback. You've done swell. I only hinted who should carry. You call it, kid."

BILL CRANE almost wept. "You're the greatest damn'—"

Time was in. Crane called the play. It was a simple little reverse, depending upon the fullback's timing, his savvy, his ability to check while the defenders surged in, and go when he should go.

Georgie crouched over the ball. At the last possible second he remembered that Ferry knew this one, that it was an old one, when Ferry had been with the Mastodons once. He saw Ferry coming in, ready with shining eyes to save the ball-game.

There was only one thing to do, and he did not have to think about it. He spun off left. The hole wasn't there—it was ahead, where Ferry was coming. But he spun left. He saw Crane's bewilderment, then saw the young quarterback react, as all good footballers do. He put down his head and followed young Bill Crane.

There was a tackle coming in. Crane hurtled into him. There was Dooley. Georgie put it all on the line, then. He reversed himself. Instead of trying to outrun Dooley, he went at the wing back. He went at him with head down and legs scissoring.

They came together on the goal-line, the referee crouching to see what

happened. They locked into a giants' embrace. Georgie heaved his shoulders once, twisting. He threw himself sideways and forward. Dooley went with him.

The referee's arms went up. Georgie lay quite still, watching the signal. So it was twenty for the Mastodons, seventeen for the Bruins. . . . So he was dead, and they could bury him right here on the goal-line, a swell place to be buried. He would like that. But no marker, because a good kid like Bill Crane might knock out his brains on a marker.

IN Tim's there was jollification now. When Helen came in with Hendershot, Georgie took his beer and they went into the last booth in the rear, which Tim had saved for them. They sat down and there was stiffness in them.

Hendershot said: "Well, Georgie. The game was won on guts. Sheer guts. You were great in there."

"Thanks, pal," said Georgie.

"I hear you have a deal in Jersey, a new league; so maybe we can make a tie-up with one of your teams for a farm."

"Oh, that? It fell through," said Georgie.

Helen's face was pallid. She said: "You bet on the Bruins today? You bet the two thousand on the Bruins?"

Georgie stared at her. "Me? Bet on a close football game like that? Why, baby, did I ever?"

She said: "But—you said you'd have four thousand tonight—"

"Oh—that." Georgie sighed. "I bet on the Cardinals to beat the Eagles. That one seemed a cinch. But Lex's boys crossed me. I'm broke, baby. Ain't I awful?"

Hendershot said: "You bet every dime you have on— Georgie! Honestly, Georgie, you're the worst man

with a dollar who ever lived!" His eyes were bright. He twisted to look at the girl sitting alongside him. "I tried, Georgie, to give you a chance—"

"Oh, it's all right," said Georgie. "Steve asked me to coach next year. I knew it was all right with you, so I accepted. Steve's goin' to quit in a couple years; and with you in the front office, I figure I'll have his job. Right, pal?"

Hendershot said: "Steve asked you— Well, Georgie, I don't own the club, you know—"

"But you have the final say on hiring and firing," Helen said softly. "Don't you, Paul?"

He stared at the girl, then at Georgie. He opened his mouth, closed it again. He said: "Er—well, of course. The other—the owners are very pleased with my deal, bringing you in, Georgie. This will be acceptable to them, with a little help from me, I am certain."

Helen said: "That meeting, Paul—with the—with the owners. . . . You'll be late—"

"Er—yes. That's right." He was clever enough to know that it was finished, that he was whipped. He arose and said: "Georgie, it was great. You were wonderful. I'll have your contract tomorrow. You may as well start right now, while you're with the club. . . . Yes."

Georgie looked after the broad, retreating back. He said: "I still can't figure it out. But he's a good loser."

"Marriage is not for you," said Helen. "You're a Happy Charley."

"Sure—I know. And your ring is in hock."

She said: "You knew out there today, when I came to you to wish you luck. You knew!"

"Sure. . . . But I wanted you free to make a choice. I been pretty lousy with you."

She said: "It's funny. Paul will never understand. He's really not so bad. He's smart, and he is very kind to me and to others. He takes his opportunities when he sees them." She paused. Georgie would never know why Paul had given him his chance. She went on: "But he'll never understand you and me. I know you had to turn me loose, Georgie, when you thought you were through. I know that."

He said: "Do you, baby?"

She said: "You'd better come over here, where I can feel you alongside me. Tim doesn't mind if you kiss me, just once. . . . He bet on the Mastodons today."

Georgie said: "I was dead, and I'm alive again. You know what? I don't feel so fast with a buck right now. I got responsibilities. I'm practically a married man. Where's that old Georgie? Good-by, Georgie."

"Hello, Georgie," Helen whispered. "Hello."



EIGHTEEN, AND A MAN GROWN, WHEN HE SET OUT THROUGH THE FOREST TO SEE THE WORLD FOR HIMSELF. BUT HE HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP BY A HERMIT MONK IN THE WILD BRITAIN OF KING ARTHUR'S DAY, AND HAD NEVER SEEN A GIRL BEFORE—OR KILLED A MAN . . .

by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS



AP IS THE BLOOD OF A tree. Blood is the sap of a man. A man is not a tree, thank God! A tree cannot pull up its roots, but a man can lift his feet.

It was early morning of a day in spring. Hawthorns were in bloom, and fiddleheads of fern uncurled and sloughed thin brown skins. A butterfly split its cocoon and unfurled and spread its crumpled wings to dry in the sun. A lark went singing up and up and out of sight. A vixen barked among the dew-wet rocks.

Good Brother Ambrose lay on his back and snored. His was a long back, and wide at the shoulders. His large mouth was open, disclosing strong teeth somewhat blunted by grinding on dried peas and such. The mastication and digestion of flinty beans and peas and parched barleycorns reduce the natural choler of the human blood and thereby promote virtue. Dear Brother Ambrose! It was now more than fifteen years since he had fled the World and the Flesh and the Devil. But as I stood and gazed down at his open and shut countenance, I suspected that he had had his fun, and called many a tune and paid many a piper, before retreating to this mountainy wilderness.

"But what about me?" I asked.

The new-hatched butterfly raised and lowered its drying wings of mulberry and azure; and receiving no other answer, I turned and stepped out and off, leaving Brother Ambrose flat on his back and snoring. . . .

I was a man. I had lived a score of years, almost—a score lacking but twenty-four months, to be exact. I had outgrown Brother Ambrose's homilies and instructions and restricted library of the Early Fathers. My head was stuffed with churchly Latin, but my nose was full of smells of May-blossom and leaf-bud and greening moss and uncurling fern. My eyes were full of new sunshine, of painted wings, and of blue and flashing distances crowded

with receding tors and crags and hanging woods. My heart was full of skylark song. I had a silver penny, a sharp knife of thrice-forged and thrice-tempered iron, and a staff of seasoned holly shod with iron. I had a wallet of doeskin, and therein four barley scones of my good friend's baking. I had a feather from a golden eagle's wing in my cap, fastened with a golden brooch. I had a mountainy man's strength and health.

I saw a wolf, glimpsed and gone like the shadow of a sky-raking falcon. I

saw a cock bustard running, a hare crouched in her form, and a raven on a thunder-blasted snag of oak. I saw a white forest cow in a dell, with horns as long and sharp as boar-spears, and a white calf suckling. She snorted and tossed her horns and chopped the sod; and I went up and around that dell by sheep-paths among rocks.

I halted six hours later, at high noon, and drank from a bubbling spring and ate a scone. After a little rest, I traveled again. I wondered if good Brother Ambrose had by now



YOUNG



WINGS UNFURLING

spied out the tracks of my flight on moss and sward. I saw a dog otter on a rock in the burn; he was mustached (Brother Ambrose is my authority) like old King Uther Pendragon. I saw where a wild bull, or maybe a unicorn, had polished a horn on the rind of a young oak. I heard a snort and crash in a thicket of hollies, and ran half a mile.

My spirits flagged in the lonely empty afternoon. Only the Old Gods and their kind keep awake all abroad in this hollow sunlight all stilled and

darkened by lengthening shadows of crag and tor. I sheltered and waited in a glade between oaks and beeches, and, thought sadly of Brother Ambrose. Was he still casting about for my tracks—peering down anxiously at the new grass and wet moss and the little places of mud? Or was he kneeling at the door of our hut, in prayer and lamentation? I saw him with my heart, kneeling, bowed, his long face sunk in his thin square hands. I had seen the strength of those hands on the throats of wolves

and the horns of a wild bull, and had felt their gentleness a hundred times when I was little and weak.

I arose from a mossy hummock, ready to turn about and retrace my ungrateful steps to the deserted hut and my only friend. But I did not turn, for I caught a scent of fire on the still air. It was not reek of smoke, but a finer, cleaner thing—the thin fragrance of clear flames of bone-dry white cedar. Head up and feet a-stumble, I traced it on the windless air. I passed through a tangled cop-



"Uncover to Sir Bevan, the knight of the Sweating Skull!"

pice and into another glade, and stopped and stood stock-still at the sound of a flute.

I beheld a small fire burning with flame as clear and pale as glass in the level sun-tide washing between slanted shadows of rock and tree. I saw four people about the fire, and their gear scattered on the greensward. By their garments of dyed woollens and linen, I knew them for intruders from the great world of towns and fairs and farms. Mountain folk go in fur and leather. One of them was a tall, large woman, long and thick of bone and flesh. She wore a shapeless garment which trailed on the ground; but her arms—as bulged with muscles as dear Brother Ambrose's—were bare to the shoulders. Her black hair was in long beribboned braids. I had never seen or imagined such a sight, for the females of the wild mountains wear

scant garments of fur and hide and sheepskin, like their males; and never had I been closer to one of those even than half-bowshot. But Brother Ambrose, pressed for information, had once warned me that women were to be known and avoided by their trailing garments and beribboned hair. Why the warning, I wondered now; for I disliked her looks strongly. I was disappointed.

Another of the company was a short, round man. He was round of head, of neck, of face and of belly, and his shoulders were rounded. He sat on the moss beside a black leather bottle, cup in hand. His face was red and cleanly shaven. A younger and taller man stood nearby on straddled legs, and blew into a flute of yellow wood. The fourth member of the company was a slender boy of thirteen years or thereabouts, in a short green tunic

with a scarlet belt and with golden curls on his shoulders.

The woman screamed at the boy to fetch water and wood. Her voice was harsher than a raven's. She flung a leather bucket at him. He snatched up the bucket and turned directly toward me and moved swiftly. I crouched in the blossoming greenery. I retreated, still crouching, backward into the hawthorns and through tangles of black juniper and alders; and suddenly my feet were in water. They slipped on wet clay, and I sprawled forward on hands and knees. I lurched upright and stood knee-deep in the ice-cold spring, and shook to the hammering of my heart.

The boy appeared, and saw me instantly. He stopped as if hit on the head. He opened his mouth, then closed it without sound. The bucket dropped from his hand, and he stood and stared, wide-eyed. His smooth cheeks were bloodless beneath their tan. But my face was red, for I felt like a fool, standing there in the icy water. I stepped up onto dry ground.

"I don't bite," I mumbled.

I tried to look both friendly and brave, but I was in terror of that big, beribboned woman.

The lad placed a warning finger on his lips. He moved toward me slowly. He came close to me; and I saw a long red scratch on one cheek. I glanced down and saw bruises on his slender legs, which were bare from the crumpled tops of the patched buskins he wore, right up to his thighs.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"Mark," I told him.

BUT he paid no attention to my answer. He had not listened to it. He snatched my left hand with his right hand and pulled at it.

"Come away from here! Quick! Don't stand gawking!"

He yanked me off my balance and moved away, pulling me with him. He ran; and I ran with him, dumfounded. He quickened his pace. He kicked off the old buskins, which were far too large for him; and we ran faster. Now we ran side by side, and still hand in hand. The grip of his slender fingers was hard as wood. He did not look at me now, but straight ahead and to his footing. But he stumbled once, and I saved him from falling by turning inward quickly and catching him around the middle with my left arm. Then he gave me a swift glance, but did not speak. We ran on, side by side as before, but no longer hand in hand. When his pace slowed and faltered, I slowed mine to match it. He stumbled again, and this time fell flat and lay gasping. I still had breath enough, but flopped down beside him, for his pride's sake. And for his company, in which I was already beginning to find pleasure.

Chapter Two

I HAD READ OF THESE THINGS

HE lay face-down, with quaking shoulders. I touched the nearer shoulder with a light hand, and it became still. The slender body and limbs became stone-still from head to heel, as if his breath and heart had died in him at my touch. Was he afraid of me? Then why had he come close to me and seized my hand and dragged me with him in his flight? I was confused. I withdrew my hand and sat up and looked down at his golden curls, the narrow back and the straight slim legs discolored by welts and bruises; and my heart hurt with pity.

"You did well, boy," I said. "You have brought me fast and far, in a masterly manner—so masterly that I came without question and am here without knowledge."

He raised his face a little from the moss and turned his head slightly, as if to hear better, but did not speak.

"You are strong and fleet, for a little lad," I said.

"And still he did not speak.

"Is the woman your mother?" I asked.

At that, he came up on his knees and faced me. His cheeks flushed and his eyes flashed, and he cried out at me.

"My mother? That filthy common bitch?"

I was startled and embarrassed. Again I felt like a fool, and even more so now than when he had discovered me standing knee-deep in the spring. I felt as if I had somehow lost the advantages of my riper age and greater size.

"I crave your pardon! But how should I know?" I stammered. "She is the first I ever set eyes on—for all I know to the contrary."

The flame of anger cooled on his cheeks and in his eyes. He regarded me curiously.

"The first *what* you ever set eyes on?" he asked.

"Woman," I said; and my glance wavered.

"God's wounds!" he cried, staring. I was shocked and confused yet further by that blasphemy; but before I could reprove him, he said:

"Are you a nitwit? You do not speak like a swineherd, nor look quite the fool you act. Who are you?"

"I am Mark, as I have already told you."

"Mark? Mark what? Of where?" I thought of the little mountain tarn behind our hut.

"Of the lake," I said, in better voice and manner, regaining something of my natural self-assurance.

"He is but a foul-mouthed, ignorant, runaway jongleur's apprentice, after all," I thought.

"And who are you?" I asked, with condescension.

By now the sun was down behind the tops of the wild mountains.

"You would be no wiser if I told you," he replied, in a weary and disdainful voice.

"What could you know of a person like me?" he added, yet more disdainfully.

I did not like that—neither the matter or manner of it.

"Of a person like you, little boy?"

I said. "Only what I have seen and heard since you attached yourself to me. I have read of people, of saints and sinners, but of nothing like you for which I thank God and Brother Ambrose. Do I care who you are? I am not in your company of my choice, but of your dragging. Do I talk and behave like a fool? Yes—in suffering your impudence. And do I not speak like a swineherd? So be it. I am not a swineherd. The swine are all wild in these wild mountains. The boars have tusks a yard long. I killed one single-handed, over a year ago. My spear broke, and I finished him with this knife. I carry scars of that fight. And yet I allowed a puny, saucy brat like you to drag me away willy-nilly from a clear fire and a leather bottle. My heart mastered my head. I pitied you, for I saw terror in your eyes. But now I am a fool, a clod, a nitwit. Have a care, little boy, or you may feel the weight of my hand."

I spoke bitterly, as I felt. I had taken a sharper hurt than I could understand.

He covered his face with his small, hard hands. His thin shoulders and narrow back quivered and quaked with his sobs.

RISING, I looked down at him. I was at a loss. I knew nothing of children, and had known no other childhood than my own. I could not remember any human playmate save poor Brother Ambrose, whom I had deserted. My other playmates had been fox cubs, a wildcat kitten, a badger tamed by Brother Ambrose, a gyrfalcon with a broken wing, and young ravens and crows. I possessed but one memory that must have been of an earlier experience than anything I had known with Brother Ambrose in these wild mountains. It was of a great white horse standing in rich grass beneath a tree full of white and pink blossoms. Brother Ambrose had never explained that bright picture.

I gazed down at that pitiful kneeling shape. It looked very small and forlorn in the gloom of early night in that high glade.

"Be a man!" I begged.

The sobbing checked for a moment, as if he held his breath, then racked on again.

"Be a man," I repeated. "What are you afraid of? You need have no fear of my hand. I have never raised it against the weak and defenseless of beast or human, and never shall. Brother Ambrose and his books—and my own heart too—have taught me better. I am no lousy jongleur. I am kind and merciful, according to my strength. Were you a man like me—as large and strong, or larger and stronger—I would not be so soft and reasonable with you. But as it is, child, you have nothing to fear from me."

I knelt beside him and spoke in simple terms of good Brother Ambrose, of our studies, of our adventures, and of the hut of stones and thatch under the high crags beside the dark tarn.

"I remember no father or mother," I told him, "and no other guardian or friend or human playmate than that good hermit from whom I ran away this morning. God forgive me!"

The boy became quiet and withdrew his hands from his eyes. His face was no more than a pale blur in the gloom.

"I learned nothing but good from him," I said. "Latin and the wisdom of the Early Christian Fathers, kindness and hardihood, skills of arms and the chase, manners and fair play and the noble game of chess."

"If he was so kind and good—your wonderful Ambrose—then why did you run away from him?" asked the boy.

"To see the world," I said. "He had seen it, and would not come away to see it again, though I plagued him day after day. To see Camelot, of which my friend had spoken sometimes with tears and wild gestures, and once had babbled about in his sleep. Royal Camelot, of crowding towers and gables, where armorers and swordsmiths beat sparks from iron day in and day out, and knights and squires and troubadours and foreign princes and soothsayers fill the humming streets and clanging courtyards, and banners fly, and shields and tavern signboards swing in the wind, and ladies and damosels walk in walled gardens and along the green terraces, and look down from high windows. Bright Camelot, where torchlight and music flood from open doors and casements, and noble and merry folk laugh and feast within, and wine and mead are quaffed from cups and bowls of gold and silver, and strong ale from great horns and leather jacks; and where the King and Queen give praise and bestow prizes for the past day's knightly deeds."

"It is a long way to Camelot," sighed the boy. "A long and crooked way from this horrible wilderness wherein we are lost and be-

nighted, without food or shelter, and in deadly peril."

And he fell to weeping again, with both hands to his wet face.

"And you—poor, nameless, boastful hobbledohoy—are my only hope!" he sobbed.

I could hardly believe my ears. But what else could I do? He had spoken loudly enough, though thickly. I mastered my first impulse to clout his ear. I mastered my outraged heart.

"It is well for you—you should thank God for it—that gentle Brother Ambrose had the schooling of me," I said in a half-choked voice. "Poor, am I? And what of yourself, runaway brat? Runaway jongleur! A hobbledohoy, am I? And nameless? And boastful? Holy Mother of Grief! I've had my fill of you, sniveler! I shall take you back where you belong—to your flea-pocked jongleurs—and you may watch me beat the fleas out of their dirty tunics. I will show you who I am, and what I am, by the knuckle-bones of Saint Wiggin! Come! I've had my fill of you."

He leaped to his feet and flung himself against me, with thin arms tight around my neck.

"No—no—no!" he cried in my face. "They would beat me—with whips and sticks. They would kill you with knives. Let me perish first in the wilderness, good boy! Good Mark! Brave Mark! I will not go back. They are cruel and vile. Let us run again, dear Mark!"

I did not move. I scarcely breathed. He held me tight. And a strange suspicion possessed me. What was it that I had read of one Queen Gwyn, in a book which Brother Ambrose had tried to conceal from me with mumbled excuses? What had I read of that gay young queen's breast that I had not understood? Of her breasts. Breasts, that was it. My heart shook me from heels to head.

"What—who—what are you?" I stammered.

THE slender arms clung tighter. The slender body pressed closer. I tried desperately to order my poor wits and to still my leaping pulses.

"I spoke in anger," I said. "Yet in jest. I did not mean it. You are safe from those rogues, for all of me—I am neither churl nor knave, though I know not my father's name. Here is food. A barley cake! I shall make a shelter for you. Fear nothing. I am strong enough to protect you from lousy jongleurs or hungry wolves."

The arms relaxed about my neck and were withdrawn. The quivering body withdrew. A hard little hand found my right hand and gripped my fingers. Then we moved forward in the dark, handfast and dumfounded. We stumbled and supported one another. We fumbled among bushes and

boulders. Thus for a mile or more of crooked distance without a moment's lighting go of hands or a word spoken. But when I felt dry bracken and dry heather of last year against my legs, I told my companion to sit down and rest, and I would construct a shelter of some sort against the chill of the night. Stumbling to the right and left, I felt out little cedars and firs, which I uprooted; and with my knife I hacked matted boughs from large pines and larches. Of all this I made a crooked, bushy little hut, which I carpeted deep with dry fern and heather.

I found my companion.

"Here is a barley scone, and here is your house," I said.

Nothing was heard for a little while save the crunching of crusts between our teeth. I was the first to finish my cake.

"What am I to call you?" I asked.

The sound of my companion's slower munching ceased.

"I shall be honest with you," I went on, without waiting for an answer, and with my wits and heart laboring. "You called me a fool and worse; and I have called you a saucy boy and worse; and I think that we may both have been wrong. I admit my ignorance of the great world and of many worldly things. I confess ignorance—and innocence—on many counts. But among Brother Ambrose's books is one called 'The Song of Queen Gwyn'—not a devotional work—which he strove to keep out of my hands, but in vain. My curiosity was aroused. I read that book. But for that book—that sprightly 'Song of Queen Gwyn'—I would perhaps still believe you to be a boy. But as matters stand—and it is but fair that I tell you this—I have a suspicion that I may have been wrong."

And there I stuck, at a loss for words.

After a silence which increased my confusion, my companion spoke in a strange small voice—a muffled voice.

"Do you mean that now—now you suspect me of—not being a boy?"

"That is so," I mumbled.

"But why? What have I to do with your old Queen Gwyn?"

"She was not old—not in the book—and she was—"

There I stuck again, and wished that I had kept my mouth shut. After a dozen of my heartbeats, my companion spoke again, and in better voice—in a kinder voice.

"You are right, good Mark. I am not a boy. I never said I was a boy. It was you who said it, good Mark. As for calling you a fool, dear Mark—and a hobbledohoy—I am sorry and ashamed. I mistook ignorance and innocence for stupidity. But now I know you to be brave and strong and noble. And clever! And I never

thought you were a swineherd. Not really, dear Mark!"

"You must be a girl," I mumbled.

"A girl? I am fifteen—almost as old as you—and as much a woman as you are a man."

A WOMAN! Brother Ambrose had not warned me against such a woman as this. I had thought female children were called girls. And this was surely a child. And yet Queen Gwyn, of the book, had not been called a girl, though as described by the writer, she must have resembled my companion in some particulars, at least. There must (I reasoned, confusedly) be large thick women, and others like that sprightly queen of the song and this one. This girl, this companion of mine, must be the same kind of woman, more or less, that Queen Gwyn had been. And yet she had been beaten by base-born rogues! My blood boiled at that thought.

"Call me Sylvia," she murmured.

"Sylvia," I said, liking its sound.

"My father was Gyles de Montclair," she said.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

"How do I know?" she returned. "In six years he may have died in bed or been killed in battle. I was left motherless at five, and my father took a Spanish woman to wife, a wandering dancer. The noble Montclair! He had brought her home from a fair. When she grew too fat with high living to dance, her sport was to beat me and make faces at me. So I ran away when I was nine. Some gypsies, who knew me, found me and took me back; and that woman met them at the gate and paid them a bag of silver pieces to take me far and far away. The gypsies treated me very well, but were afraid that I might be discovered with them, so they sold me to the jongleurs two years ago. And now I am here. You will not sell me, dear Mark?"

I swore a resounding oath at that. I clapped a hand to my knife.

"When you quit my care, it will be only at your own wish," I cried. "And I will take you to your father, if that be your pleasure; and I will show him the rights of the matter. I do not fear the Spanish woman. Where is your home, Sylvia?"

She did not know. It was six bitter years, and hundreds of weary journeys away. It was a wide house of stone and great timbers, with a high tower of stone, and a deep moat. Her father's village lay within bowshot, with a little river winding through it. But if the river had a name, she had never heard it, or had forgotten it.

"It may be on the way to Camelot," I said hopefully.

She crept into the shelter I had built for her, and I lay down near the entrance to it on an armful of old



*I felt nothing of fear,
nothing but hate. He
moved suddenly and
fast, but I moved faster.
I struck first—and
he staggered.*

Chapter Three

I KILL A JONGLEUR

heather. My thoughts were racing—but to what goal? My situation might well have caused even a man of the world a measure of bewilderment and anxiety. Here I was but a day's flight from Brother Ambrose, and already I had a damosel on my hands! A frightened child-damosel. I could protect her from wild beasts and wild people, of that I felt confident—but how was I to feed her? Why had I not thought to bring away a whole back-load of scones and smoke-cured venison?

I was disturbed by a rustling within the shelter, and next by a hand on my face. It was the girl.

"Methinks there is a viper in my bed," she whispered.

I crept within and made chaff of the fern and heather of her couch with a stout stick. I backed out, and she crawled in. I lay down again, but not for long. Again the rustling, and again the fumbling of the light but hard little hand. And again the whisper.

"Dear Mark, there's a spider in that horrid den!"

In hunting for the spider, I all but knocked the place to pieces. Then I crawled back to my own nest and fell asleep in the blink of an eye. But it was not restful sleep. I fought with a masked robber, and discovered the face of Brother Ambrose behind the mask; I fled from a unicorn, with the girl Sylvia in my arms.

I AWOKE in the chill dawn. Shadows and mists of night clung black and white in the glens and gullies, but sunlight washed and overspilled the mountains. I glimpsed gold on my breast, but not of the rising sun. I looked, twisting my neck—and remembered yesterday. The damosel lay close beside me, with her bright head nested in the hollow of my left shoulder. She was asleep. She breathed without sound, but I could feel the gentle stir of her breathing against my heart. My heart raced, but its galloping did not seem to disturb her. I shifted my position a little, softly, softly. At last I got to my feet without awaking her.

We broke our fast on scones and cold water.

"I was afraid, last night," said the damosel, giving me a fleeting but clear-eyed glance. "But not of vipers and spiders, dear Mark. I am not afraid of such small things, nor even

mice. My fear was that you might escape me if I let you out of my sight; and as I could not watch you in the dark, nor with my eyes closed in sleep, I had to touch you. I had to keep in touch with you, asleep and awake. You sleep like a log, good Mark."

"I gave you my word—but let it pass!" I muttered.

I was embarrassed; and to change the subject, I asked what had brought those jongleurs so far from their world of towns and fairs. Then I heard a tale of crimes, robberies and murders, which those three had committed against men and women and children, and of desperate flights from avengers.

"David stabbed an old man and a little boy to death ten days since, who had come upon him killing a sheep and made shrill outcry," she concluded.

"David? Is he the loon who plays the flute?" I asked.

"And throws knives," she said. "And whips me. He beat me yesterday. No, it was the day before."

"Why did he beat you?" I asked in a thick voice.

"I would not be his wife," she whispered.

Heat and cold went through me. I burned with the black flame and black frost of loathing and hate. I turned my eyes from her bright bowed head—and only in the nick of time. I came to my feet quicker than thought, staff in hand.

HE stood not ten paces off—the loathly jongleur. He had a short sword in his right hand, and a terrible grin on his face. I felt nothing of fear. I had killed a wild boar, a wolf, a wild bull. I felt nothing but hate. He moved suddenly and fast, but I moved faster. I struck first, and leaped aside, turning, and struck again. He staggered, and I flailed him again, and he lost his sword. Now he snarled and spat blood and curses. A long knife appeared in his hand. The bones of his upflung hand cracked like dry twigs to the stroke of my iron-shod staff. I hurled him down and struck downward, but he twisted aside on the ground, and now there was a knife in his left hand. It flashed upward—but even as it ripped my right cheek, I struck again with all my strength and loathing.

I stood and stared, breathing hard. Blood ran down my face and neck, unheeded. I heard nothing of the girl Sylvia, and did not turn my head to look for her. My eyes and thoughts were upon the dead jongleur. Wolf and boar and bull I had killed in honest fury of combat, for my dear life's preservation; but I had killed this man in hate, and without thought of my own life. I had killed him against odds of weapons. So fierce and deadly and calculating was my

hate that I could have killed him with my empty fingers.

I went to a little spring, and knelt and bathed my shallow wound until the bleeding stopped. The clear water was all red by then, and I felt weak and weary. I moved aside and hunched on a tussock of fern; and then I saw Sylvia for the first time since my sudden awareness of the jongleur. Now she was kneeling at the little spring, as I had knelt there, but instead of laving her face, she was washing something between her hands—washing, wringing, dipping and wringing again. Squinting, I saw that it was a strip from her tunic—from that short tunic which could ill spare even an inch of its stuff. A moment later, she stumbled up and came to me at a wavering run and tied the cold, moist bandage around my face with fumbling fingers. Then she crouched beside me, but did not look at me.

"He—that dirty rogue—will never touch you again," I said.

She did not speak; but, and still without meeting my glance, she pulled up on a thin cord at her neck and brought into view a little knife in a doekin sheath. She drew it from the sheath and turned it about in her hand, regarding it fixedly and curiously. Suddenly she turned a little and set the point of the knife quickly and lightly to my arm. I winced at the prick of it. She uttered a strange, short, mirthless note of laughter. She spoke then, but still without bringing her glance to mine.

"If you had not killed him, I would have killed him. It is sharp enough, isn't it? He felt the point of it yesterday. Nay, the day before yesterday. I was ready—but could I have kept awake always? And then you came. I was ready; and had he killed you, I would have killed him—dead throughout eternity—had it taken a thousand stabs."

She sheathed the little knife.

"I do not need it now," she said, still with averted eyes. "You may have it, good Mark."

"Nay, keep it," I said. "There may be more fights, and I may be killed yet."

She dropped the little knife back into its hiding-place.

"He was a knife-thrower," she ran on in a low voice. "He was very skillful. I stood against a door, and he stuck knives in the wood all around me. Sometimes he cut me a little, so that my blood ran on the door, just for sport. It made the people laugh, to see me wince and bleed, and to hear my cries."

I sprang to my feet.

"God rot him! And may every fool who laughed at that sport roast in hell!" I cried.

At that, she flung herself against me in an outburst of sobs and tears, and

clung to me, pressing her face to my breast; but before my astonished arms could enfold her, she had sprung away. She stood with her back to me, stifling her sobs.

I let it go at that. I too was shaken. In silence, I gathered up the short sword and the longest knife. Then we went from that dread place. We traveled rough ways for hours, moving and stumbling close together and sometimes touching hands, but without exchange of word or look. I began to feel remorse at having cursed the dead jongleur's immortal soul. I was glad and proud of the killing, but misdoubted the rightness of the cursing. Dear Brother Ambrose would have killed him, under the circumstances, but would have left him uncursed. I had given him his earthly deserts, but who was I to damn his dirty soul? Brother Ambrose was the better Christian of the two of us.

I sat down on a mossy rock and pressed a hand to my bandaged cheek. The damosel turned and came back to me and laid an anxious hand on my shoulder.

"Does it hurt, poor Mark?" she asked.

"Nay, it is my conscience that hurts me," I said.

She withdrew her hand.

"For slaying that—that jongleur?"

"Nay, I suffer no remorse for the slaying! Had there been six of him, I would have slain all, with God's help—and so perish all who have ever caused you pain or fear! But to curse his lousy soul was unchristian."

The hand returned to my shoulder.

"It was already cursed," she murmured. "One more curse will damn him no further; one less would not save him. Forget him, dear Mark. It is your poor face I worry about. Come to this little well, and let me dress your wound again."

I could have laughed at that, but she was serious. We went, hand in hand, to where ice-cold water trickled from the ferny base of a great rock. She was a long time, but gentle beyond describing, about the task of removing, wetting and returning the bandage to its place. When it was done, we stood and smiled uncertainly.

"It is time to eat," I said.

BUT my wallet was empty; we had eaten all the scones. I had nothing to offer her. I was filled with shame, though empty otherwise. I cut two short cudgels of thorn, and hunted to the right and the left. I spied a big jack hare on his haunches, and I knocked him over with the first throw. I was proud, but Sylvia covered her eyes with a hand. I went aside and skinned and dressed the thin, sinewy carcass. With a flint and a knife, dust of dry fern and twigs of

old beather, I made fire. When the roasting was done, the damsel came and sat beside me, and I carved her the best pieces. It proved tough, dry and tasteless, but we were thankful for it.

Chapter Four

"THAT WAS A KISS."

"AND now will you kill me a wolf, dear Mark?" she asked, licking her fingers daintily.

She held them in air, glancing around, then wiped them dry on the breast of my leather tunic. "The act did not offend me. I saw nothing unmannerly in it.

"But you would not eat a wolf?" I protested.

She laughed at that, and so I laughed too.

"Nay, 'tis the skin I want, stupid Mark. I need a cloak, or something of the kind. This tunic is too short and scant, I think. Or are my legs too long?"

She looked at me anxiously and inquiringly. Her eyes were not like any other I had ever seen, unless I had forgotten them since babyhood. They were not like Brother Ambrose's, though his were brave and clear and kind, nor like any beast's or bird's. I cannot say what they were like, save only that they were beautiful and that I felt a desire to look at them more often than I dared to; though why it was a question of daring I did not then know, in my ignorance and innocence of life and the great world.

"My poor legs are too thin," she said. "And they are bruised and welted. Look at this welt. But he is dead now, that grinning devil—dead at your hands."

I nodded my head and stared at my hands, opening and closing them. They were strong and square. I did not look at my companion's legs, nor at any part of her. A voice within me warned that the less I looked at her, the better my chances of enjoying peace of mind and calm of spirit.

"You don't like my looks," she murmured.

I kept silent.

"Nor anything about me," she added.

I retorted angrily: "Then why did I slay the jongleur?"

"He would have killed you, else," she said.

"Nay, 'twas for you—little fool!" I shouted at her, red of face, and hurt of heart and vanity.

Then I bowed my head for shame. She came and knelt beside me, and laid an arm across my shoulders.

"Then you do not hate me, dear Mark?" she murmured.

I shook my hanging head.

"It may even be that you like me?"

I nodded.

"And you will not desert me?"

"God strike me dead first!" I cried.

I felt a hard little hand under my chin, raising my head. I did not resist. Her eyes were close to mine. They were all I could see, as if the whole spring world of sunshine and blossom and crag and leaf had been drowned in their bright and shadowy depths. I was drowning too, and closed my eyes. I felt her lips on mine; and my heart wrenched and labored in my side as if it were breaking. Lips and arm were withdrawn. I opened my eyes like a diver returning to the surface from the depths of a mountain tarn.

Sylvia was standing a pace or two away, with her back to me.

"That was a kiss," she said, without turning.

I said nothing. I knew nothing of kisses.

She continued: "Hereafter, though queens love you, never will you receive or give a kiss, but that first kiss of mine will slip between her lips and yours."

"So be it!" I muttered; and then I cried, "Queens?" and laughed like a fool.

My heart and brains were alike shaken and jumbled in wild and sweet confusion. Verses from "The Song of Queen Gwyn" came to me with meanings never guessed before. The damsel turned and looked at me, with arched and anxious brows for a moment, then with a strange smile. I mastered my extraordinary emotions, and stood up and went and collected my sword and staff and knives. I did not look at Sylvia, though I felt her enigmatic gaze and smile upon me. I flourished the sword.

"And now for the wolf!" I cried, with feigned enthusiasm.

Chapter Five

MAD SQUIRE AND SWEATING KULL

I WENT ahead by crooked ways, and Sylvia followed close. We walked a long time, in silence. Not once did I look behind me, but my ears did not miss a step of her light feet on moss or sod or stone. We had come three leagues or more from the ashes of our fire and the bones of the roasted hare, when my companion screamed. I turned, and beheld a shape out of a nightmare. The blood chilled in my veins and my scalp crawled—but I drew the sword and flung myself between it and Sylvia.

The monster's head was encased in rusted iron, which I knew for a helmet with a closed vizard, by Brother Ambrose's talk of such things. There was a glint of pale, crazed eyes behind the bars of the vizard. On the broad breast bulged a curved plate of rusty iron, from beneath which hung wolf

and wildcat skins. The long arms and legs were half uncovered, save for their own hair like long gray moss. They were gnarled and kinked like wind-clawing roots of an ancient oak up-torn by flood and storm. They were like the legs of a hunter-spider. One knotted hand gripped the cross-hilt of a long straight sword. The other held aloft a human skull as white as chalk in the sunshine.

Sylvia trembled against my back.

"'Tis a warlock!" she whispered.

That was my thought too, but I strove against it.

"UNCOVER to Sir Bevan, whose quest was the Questing Beast," said the monster.

The voice was like a winter wind in the smoke-hole. The language was not of the wild mountaineers. It was one of the two which Brother Ambrose had taught me—not the monkish, bookish Latin, but the speech of Royal Camelot, and the world of ladies and knights and troubadours. My blood warmed a little; for it must be human, after all, however mad; some ancient knight lost and gone mad in the wilderness. And I had heard tales of the Questing Beast from Brother Ambrose.

"Nay, fool, I am not Sir Bevan," he cried, as if he had read my thought. "This is Sir Bevan, the noble and forsaken knight of the Sweating Skull. Uncover to him, rogue!"

I heard Sylvia gabbling desperate prayers with her face between my shoulderblades. I doffed my cap to the grinning skull.

"I am Young Roland," said the old madman. "I am that faithless squire. Sir Bevan, this peerless knight, and my unworthy self, pursued the Questing Beast through days and nights and weary weeks, and at last into these accursed mountains and to the Mere of Herons. There, bewitched, I turned aside. There I failed him. For mad nights and days I was bewitched and bedeviled and bedamned by a hell-spawned water-sprite—a girl as white and smooth as Easter lilies, and red-lipped like roses—fairer than any Christian damsel—but green of eyes and hair, and soulless, and with a flame of hellfire in her white breast instead of a heart.

"And when she fled my arms, with mocking laughter, I sought Sir Bevan and my Christian duty again. I found him—but dead and dismembered, his head here, his heart there, his limbs hacked and scattered. His great horse had suffered a like fate. But a score of savages were dead too, some speared through, some cut in halves, one rib-crushed as if by arms of iron, for Sir Bevan was a mighty man of his hands. Remaining mountaineers set upon me in swarms, but I still had my horse, and was armed and ready. I spitted



Sylvia checked, turned and crouched. "Look!" she gasped.

the savages like larks—three on my spear at a time—before my horse was hamstringed and brought down. Then a dozen fell to my sword. And now, horseless and with Sir Bevan's death on my conscience, I bide here and herabouts, and hunt and slay unchristened savages in loving memory of this betrayed knight, and to the glory of God. But of late years, I have found but few to slay, and now I can find none at all, though I search high and low. But if you are of these foul and unshaved heathens, I must deal with you."

"Nay, I am Mark, a Christian!" I cried. "Does not my speech tell you so, good sir? But if you want Latin, I'm your man! *Expectans equito. Dum spiro spero.* And this poor youth is my companion in adversity."

He glanced from me to the damsel and back again, and then aside, his eyes glinting as cold as flakes of ice behind the bars of his vizard.

"So be it," he croaked.

He jabbed the great sword a hand's breadth into the turf and let it stand so, swaying, while he fished a folded

square of linen, yellow with age, from behind his breastplate. He unfolded and spread the linen on the ground and placed the skull upon it, with reverent care. He knelt, mumbled a prayer, wrapped the skull in the cloth and tucked it under his left arm and got stiffly to his feet. He raised his rusty vizard—and but for the palely glinting eyes and beaklike nose, his whole face looked to be a tangle of white whiskers. He freed, flourished and shouldered the long sword.

"Come to the Mere of Herons," he commanded.

I followed old Young Roland at a cautious distance, but Sylvia pressed upon me toe-to-heel, even with a grip on the back of my belt at times. I could feel her shivers. Now and then we passed uninhabited, broken huts with fallen roof-trees, singly and in desolate clusters.

"The handiwork of Young Roland," croaked our guide, with a terrible gesture of arm and sword.

He set a hard pace, possessed by the energy of madness, and the endurance and agility of a goat; and I put from

my mind all thought of breaking away while he held that sword. I was thankful when we came at last to a margin of the mere, and two rough but undamaged huts, and our guide halted.

"Await me here, while I prepare food and drink for you," he said, with a glittering backward glance.

Then he stooped double and entered one of the hovels, still with the sword in his right hand and the linen-wrapped skull under his left arm. Sylvia came to my side and clung to me. There we stood as if spellbound, with daunting smells of rank smoke, live embers, cold ashes, old bones and rotting hides in our noses. Her tremors shook me.

She whispered: "Are you still—afraid of him—dear Mark?"

"I never was—of that old loon!" I whispered back. "But I don't like him—nor trust him. And now is our chance to escape," I added.

"Look! He is making up the fire for supper! And we shall have more strength for escaping after we have eaten," she said.

A puff of dark smoke spangled with red sparks belched up from a hole in the sagging roof.

"Now! Come away now!" I urged.

"But I am hungry," she protested, though she continued to quiver and quake with fear.

I was about to drag her away, but just then the terrible creature reappeared, brushing sparks from his whiskers.

He had left his helmet and breastplate and the skull within, but the sword was still long and naked in his right hand. Now he was all hide and hair and fur—of wolf and fox and wild-cat and his hideous self.

"Await me there—and you shall eat and drink your fill," he said; but to me it sounded more like a threat than an invitation to supper.

He stalked to the edge of the mere, where a small raft was moored among greening rushes and osiers. He stood his sword upright in the mud and made a great step onto the raft. There he crouched and pulled a squirming net up and inward. He flung six fat carp ashore, one by one. They jumped on the grass like tumblers at a fair. (I had no memories of tumblers or fairs, but Brother Ambrose had told me of them.) Sylvia laughed, though she still shivered.

"I can do better than those fat fishes," she cried.

SHE released my arm, took a few turning heels-over-head in air and came lightly to earth on her feet. She sprang again, but turned over backward that time. She was taut for a third skyward leap, but I jumped and clutched her and held her tight.

"Would you break your neck?" I protested.

She changed from hard to soft in my embrace. I might have thought she possessed neither sinew or bone, had I not known better.

"What is my neck to you?" she whispered.

I gazed down at her neck, while cudgeling my brains for a seemingly answer to her question. But I could think of nothing that would not have sounded foolish. I was about to loosen my arms, though without haste, when Roland passed close to us, with the six fish in a willow basket, and glanced at us in passing with eyes like flakes of mica in a rock. So I did not loosen my hold upon Sylvia. He stooped and reentered the hut. We remained motionless and silent. He reappeared in a minute, and stood and eyed us bleakly.

"The skull of Sir Bevan has ceased to sweat," he said.

MY companion shivered against me. I had nothing to say; but an icy, twitching tingle went up my spine and crept on my scalp. My arms twitched and tightened.

"Which means, I take it, that the good knight is satisfied at last with my poor efforts to avenge his ignominious death at the hands of unregenerated savages," resumed the madman. "So now my task in this benighted wilderness is accomplished, and I can return to the world and resume my interrupted career of chivalry with an easy conscience."

He paused, and his tongue-tip, startlingly red, flickered for an instant between his hidden lips.

"Go a day's march to the north, a two days' march to the east and south and west, and you will find no man nor woman nor child," he continued. "They stayed and were killed, or they fled to securer retreats. Neither will you find that water-sprite. I killed her. I slew that nymph, that witch, whose sea-green eyes, and hair like sunlight spun through young beech leaves, and round breasts whiter and softer than sea-foam, lured me from my duty. She had no soul. There are many and various witches—beautiful and forever young—unchanged by the years, being soulless—yet reduced to nothing by a sword-stroke. The blessed Bishop Hew of Ludsgate wrote a book about all such, for a warning—about water-sprites, wood-nymphs, marsh-maids, and mermaids of rocky coasts and sandy places, and the White Sisters and Queen Blanche—all lovely to sight and touch, all deadly to knightly souls."

He drew breath and lowered his baleful glance.

"He takes me for a witch," sighed Sylvia.

He lifted his glance to my face.

"Beware the White Maid of Tintagel!" he croaked.

Then he turned and stooped and went into the hut again.

Sylvia shivered in my arms, and I shook with her shivering and my own. "Now's our time!" she shrieked against my breast. "Let us go—let me go now—come away, you dolt!—or he will kill me as he did the beautiful water-sprite—the mad and wicked old fool!"

She squirmed in my arms.

"But your hunger?" I protested.

Smoke and the smell of scorching fish came out to us. But the damsel's hunger was forgotten, evidently; for she thrust and twisted so violently—all the softness of her slender body turned suddenly to sinew and bone again—as to escape from my embrace. She ran swiftly toward a rocky knoll. I remained stock-still for a moment in two minds. Would I run too, or stop and fight? How could I serve her best? What chance had I, with a short sword, against that mad but war-wise old squire and his long sword? I shook off my hesitancy and ran too. Sylvia went flashing and turning upward among boulders and bushes, and I followed at my best pace. She checked, turned and crouched in a clump of stunted thorns, and I stumbled with my knees beside her.

"Look!" she gasped.

I peered out and down through the screen of little leaves.

Chapter Six

WARLOCK OR MAN?

THE hairy old avenger issued from the hut bent double, and straightened his long back slowly. He carried a smoking trencher in his hands. He weaved his shaggy head from side to side, and I saw the pale glimmer of his eyes as they turned in their bony sockets. The searching glance checked at last at the base of our knoll, then slid upward slowly, over bushes and boulders, to the very thicket from which we gazed down at him. Again it checked for a moment, gleamed fixedly and yet more balefully, then flickered aside.

"He saw us!" cried Sylvia against my shoulder, in a voice as thin as the pipe of a grasshopper, yet vibrant with horror.

He set the trencher down on the grass, then moved away to the smaller hut with grotesque action, as if he walked on sticks, but with frightful speed. There he plucked open a small door and was enveloped by belching smoke. But he did not flinch; and when the smoke thinned, we saw that he held a long, wide and flat object in his hands. He stood the thing against the wall of the hut.

"It's bacon," sighed my companion.

"A smoke-cured side of a wild pig," I whispered back. "I know it well—sliced and grilled. Brother Ambrose and I had a bigger smokehouse than that. The swine of our mountains fed on beechnuts and acorns and truffles and all manner of sweet roots, and their flesh was exceeding sweet, and not too fat."

I SAID that to take Sylvia's mind off her terror of the madman, who by then had carried the great side of smoke-cured meat into the larger hut.

"This may be just as good," whispered Sylvia. "It looked good from here. And maybe he did not see us, after all. I think he would have run after us if he had seen us. I think that maybe he is so mad he has forgotten all about us."

I knew she was aware of her hunger again, and more keenly than before.

"I don't know about that, but I mean to make a raid on his smokehouse as soon as he sleeps," I said.

"Some mad people never sleep," she replied, in a desperate voice. "And if he is truly a warlock, he never needs to sleep."

"That old loon is no warlock," I told her firmly. "He's nothing but a bad old man with an addled brain. Him and his sweating skull! I'm not afraid of him—not while I have an eye on him. Strong as he is, he is all bones and gristle. He is not as strong as that loathly jongleur I killed. If I had his great sword, or even if he had only a short sword like mine, I would take all the bacon we need, willy-nilly, from right under his whiskers."

The sight and talk of bacon had revived my courage even as it had sharpened Sylvia's hunger. The mad old squire emerged from the gloom of the larger hut again, and placed a second trencher beside the first. Sylvia pinched my arm.

"Sliced and broiled," she whispered.

Old Young Roland fetched a brown loaf and a black leather bottle from the hut, then squatted close to the feast, with his front toward our knoll, and fell to. He clutched at the provender with both hands. Never had I seen or read of such unmannerly behavior. The sight would have shocked and infuriated dear Brother Ambrose. He fed his champing maw with both hands, stuffing it with bread and baked fish and bacon all at once, and washing the glutinous mouthfuls down, at risk of strangulation, with mighty swigs at the leather bottle.

"May he choke to death on a great fish-bone!" prayed Sylvia, staring in horrid fascination. "But don't look at him, dear Mark," she went on, still looking herself. "He does it to tease our hunger and thirst—to tempt us down—the old devil!"

I was of her opinion, but I did not close my eyes or avert my gaze. We

both continued to gaze at the sickening sight as if bewitched.

"Look!" she gasped, pinching me again.

He had drained that great bottle. He shook it, then flung it from him. Then he heaved and hoisted himself until his stiff knees were straight under him. His face was raised to the thicket in which we crouched. Despite the fading daylight, we could see the pale glimmer of his eyes.

"He is coming for us!" gasped Sylvia, pulling and plucking at me and trembling against me. "Come away! He's a devil! A warlock! Not a man to fight like a man!"

"Wait," I said.

THE monster moved grotesquely, more than ever as if his legs were sticks—as if they were crooked sticks. He stepped over the trenchers and came three paces toward our knoll, still staring up at our thicket. Sylvia trembled against me, but made no sound. He halted and stood swaying. He turned, stepped back across the trenchers and leaped to the open door of his den and disappeared within, quick as a fox.

"You see," whispered Sylvia. "The drink has not slowed him. If he were human, he could not move so fast. He'd be drunk."

"He's human," I muttered.

But I was beginning to doubt it.

"Look!" gasped Sylvia.

He was back at the point from which he had leaped. Now he had a boar-spear in his left hand, and a second leather bottle in his right. He let the spear fall at his feet and raised the bottle with both hands. He lifted it high above his head and toward our hiding-place, as if in salute, and uttered a cry of hate and derision and diabolical mirth which still rings in my ears in nightmares. It chilled the marrow of my bones; but at the same time, it filled my heart with a red fury of hate—for Sylvia's sake. For she was clinging to me now in a passion of terror, all but strangling me with her slender arms. Her face was pressed hard against my neck.

"There, there!" I croaked. "He'll not harm you—man or devil!"

And I kept my eyes on him. I saw him tip the vessel to his upturned mouth and hold it there while my hot heart thumped ten times. He lowered it and uttered that hellish cry again.

"I'll kill him for that!" I swore.

He drank again. I loosened Sylvia's arms a little, the better to breathe.

"He knows we are here," I said.

"Let me stand straight and uncramp my muscles. He is still swigging at the second bottle."

Sylvia loosed her arms and withdrew her face from my neck, but stood up when I did, and continued to shiver against me. I continued to watch the

madman, straining my eyes against the dusk. I saw him fling the second bottle from him even as he had flung the first. I saw him stoop and recover the short spear, though he stumbled in the act.

"Good!" I cried, grasping my iron-shod staff. "He is coming—and with only a boar-spear. He has forgotten his great sword. Hah—he stumbles again! The drink has gone to his head—the mead or usquebaugh or strong ale. He is no more a warlock than was that accursed jongleur, and will as surely die."

"No, no!" she begged, gripping me by an arm and pulling at me. "He is old and crafty—even if he's not a warlock. Come away now! He only pretends to be drunk—the easier to catch us. He would burn me for a witch! Run, you fool!"

That did it. My courage had begun to waver and the urge of my hateful fage to weaken, but both flamed up again, hotter and higher, and yet cold and steady with bitterness at that word from her dear lips. Fool!

"Not so!" I cried. "I've run far enough from that wicked knave! You run, if you must—but this fool stays and fights!"

I wrenched free of her and pushed my way through and clear of the screening thicket, staff in hand. Staff against short spear. It would be a fair fight. Brother Ambrose had always preached the virtue of fair fighting.

He was halfway up the slope, leaping and stumbling. The ground was steep, and rough with knuckles of rock and great boulders. I moved down to meet him, but not as fast as he moved up toward me. Nor as crookedly; for he sprang from side to side in his ascent, and even his stumbles were out of line. Once he came down on all-fours and remained so for seconds, swaying his drooped head from side to side as if utterly befuddled and exhausted, as harmless and as defenseless as a toad, and completely at my mercy for the moment.

"Now!" cried Sylvia, behind me. "Strike now!"

But I was not in striking distance; and how was I to slay one that made no effort to attack or escape or defend himself, though he were Satan himself? Two strides would have placed me in my staff's length of his unprotected, befuddled head: one stroke would have cracked that hoary skull like a nut—but my feet stuck to the ground. Good Brother Ambrose had instilled the spirit of knightly chivalry into my very muscles and nerves.

Sylvia screamed—and he was upon me. I twisted aside, fending with my unready staff. The head of the jabbing spear missed my neck, but the shaft and the hand gripped on it hit hard. But even as I staggered from

that blow, I struck with my left hand. My knife was in my left hand. I felt it pierce tough leather, and the jar of hand and hilt on bone; and a scream so terrible and bestial and despairing rang out that I loosed the grip of my tingling fingers. The writhing body fell away from me. It fell to the ground, still screaming like a damned soul. It rolled on the steep slope, still screaming.

Now Sylvia was upon me.

"Well struck—by God's grace!" she cried. "He will kill no more babes and women and water-sprites. To the bacon now! And the long sword!"

"My knife," I said, dazedly. "It is a good knife."

BUT when she pulled at my empty left hand, I followed her down from the knoll, still in a daze.

"The saints and angels were on your side, or you would be dead now and I—would be dying," she said, dropping my hand and facing me with a long look that was half of fond reproach and half of anger. "A child could have spared you to the heart while you stood gawking—but for the unseen hand that turned the point aside."

"But it is the madman who is dead—and of my knife," I said.

"An accident—by God's grace," she answered. "You ignored my cry. You had him at your mercy, but stood like a fool—with no thought of me."

"He lay helpless and defenseless—so I believed. And it was my duty as a Christian and a gentleman to wait till he could regain his feet," I protested.

"And he regained them—and struck to slay you!" she cried, with bitter scorn. "Must all the saints and angels always be on hand to save you from your stubborn folly? And what of a Christian gentleman's duty to me?"

"I have already slain two men in your service, and the death of the jongleur was no accident," I said. "And I have fed and sheltered you to the best of my ability; and now I shall go to his hut and bring out that side of bacon, and what bread I can find there, so that the Damosel of Montclair may eat her fill tonight and tomorrow, and even until she finds a more satisfactory provider and companion."

With that, I turned sharply and ran toward the larger of the two hovels, but checked at the entrance, my hot indignation dispelled by a cold stab of thought—and most of my vainglorious courage with it. The skull! It lay within, in the heavy dark. The sweating skull! But old bones do not sweat, I told myself. 'Tis a madman's raving. But the place is evil: damned and be-deviled. The old avenger's blood-lust has bewitched it. It is accursed. Natural laws do not rule in this cruel

and unholy darkness. But I stooped and bunched my muscles and twitching nerves for the plunge. I would fetch out that bacon if I died for it—to shame the ungrateful girl. I began a defiant oath, changed it to a desperate prayer, shut my eyes and—staggered backward, yanked violently by my belt. I twisted around—and Sylvia's arms were about me. Her face was a pale mask, and her eyes were black holes in it. She cried out in a broken voice: "Not there! If you enter there—that place of evil and sorcery—and perish, body and soul, if you are already bit by that madness—what of me? Oh, dear Lord Christ, if Mark is mad, let the same madness bite me too—that I may perish with him!"

Her arms fell from me. She pressed her hands to her face and sobbed wildly. I pressed my hands to her shoulders and tried to still her shaking and trembling. Now all my fear was for her, and it mounted to a terror deeper than my fear of sorcery.

"Be still, dear heart! Nay, I am not mad! What have we to do with madness—you and I, who have never shed innocent blood? I'll not enter there, I swear it! I was a fool to think of it instead of the smokehouse!"

I lowered my hands to her waist, lifted her and held her against my breast. Her sobs quieted, and her arms slipped up and about my neck, but she did not speak. . . . And then I remembered the mad old avenger; and I set her on her feet and loosed our embraces suddenly.

"My knife!" I cried. "It was Brother Ambrose's gift!"

I RAN back to the base of the knoll and to the side of the corpse. Or was it a corpse? Now I was full of caution, and I hesitated about stooping and looking closer for the knife. I would have prodded the crumpled thing with my staff, but for the fact that I had dropped it somewhere. But now Sylvia was beside me; and she had my staff. No spoken word passed between us: but she stooped forward and poked at the figure on the ground with the iron-shod end of my staff. She thrust hardly five times.

"Dead," she whispered.

Then I went close and stooped low, and soon found the haft of my knife and laid hold of it; and all the while I was aware of the staff being pressed against the thing on the ground, for my protection against trickery, by all of my companion's strength. I withdrew the short blade.

"Is it bloody?" Sylvia asked in a fearful whisper.

I held it close to my eyes.

"Yes," I said; and I thrust it into the turf, and again and again, as if to clean it.

But it was a lie. The blade was as dry as if I had stabbed a skeleton.

"God be praised!" cried Sylvia. "He was no warlock, but only a cruel old human devil after all. Glory be to the saints!"

I said nothing to that, but returned the knife to its sheath with fumbling fingers. She was right: but she would not think so if I told her the truth. He had been nothing but a cruel old madman, I had thought so myself, for I did not believe in warlocks and their kind. Dear Brother Ambrose had schooled me well. *But there had been no blood or any moisture on the blade that had pierced his evil heart and sped his hateful life!*

AND so I went back to the huts in silence, for the lie to Sylvia irked my conscience, even though I had told it for her own comfort. I went to the smokehouse and opened the door; and when the smoke had thinned, I found by touch and lifted out a great ham and threw it on the ground. Sylvia was beside me again, silent but watchful, and still armed with the iron-shod staff.

"The loaves are in there where he slept and cooked—if any are left," I said.

She shook her head, vastly to my relief; for I did not relish the thought of entering there.

"I could not stomach bread of his kneading," she said, and shivered in distaste.

I stepped to where the long sword still stood upright in the sod and laid my right hand on the hilt.

"This is a knightly weapon and may serve us well," I said, making to pluck it to me.

But it did not come away, though it was sunk by only a hand's breadth in the ground. I tried to work it clear, but without avail. Then I tried to draw the great cross-hilt toward me. It stood stiffer than a tree. I set both hands to the hilt and pulled hard and harder, but without effect—till it came away so suddenly that I staggered back and all but fell. But I held tight to the great sword, which was now free and responsive to my hands.

"What was it?" cried Sylvia.

"Nothing," I said, steadying heart and lungs. "Stuck in an old root or something. But now—see, it is like a wand in my hands! Now we are free again—even as this knightly sword is free again—to go on our way to Camelot."

She came close and murmured: "Take me in your arms again, dear Mark, for I am still faint with fear."

I laid the sword down gently, then took her in my arms and held her tenderly.

"Now kiss me," she murmured, with her face against my breast.

I thought of Brother Ambrose. He had taught me that all sin is not of cruelty and hate and violence and

treachery. He had told me that sin may be sweeter than honey.

"That I may not do—not here and now," I stammered. "Not that I do not want to! That would be different. To kiss you against my wish and desire would be no sin. But as it is—my heart and my very soul craving your kisses—it would be a grievous and pious sin."

"Did your old Brother Ambrose tell you that?" she murmured, still with her face in the hollow of my left shoulder.

"Yes, he did—but at the time I did not know what he meant, exactly," I answered, still stammering. "Then I did not understand," I added.

"Nor you don't know now!" she cried. "Nor understand! Nor did that foolish hermit understand. And you are a man now—and he is still a hermit—and a coward. Only a coward would be afraid of kisses. Only a coward—or worse than a coward—would run away from kissing and jousting and feasting and adventure to these miserable wild mountains. Or what else did he fear? Had he committed murders and robberies, like vile jongleurs and lawless gypsies? Ah, that is it! Your saintly old Ambrose fled and hid from worse than kisses, methinks! He was more concerned about his mortal neck than for his immortal soul, I trow!"

I cried out that it was not so, with a rough oath. And I pushed her from me with rough hands. Who was she—this ignorant girl I had saved from the jongleurs at risk of my life—to revile and defame my dear, gentle, honorable friend and guardian? She was beautiful; but how would her beauty have served her if I had not been at hand? And would I have been so eager to defend her, and so able to strike and kill for her, had I not learned Christian charity and knightly chivalry and battling courage from Brother Ambrose?

I felt a hot, base impulse to slap her face. Instead—and red of face for my shame of that knavish impulse—I clapped a harsh hand to each of her shoulders. God, how frail and tender they felt! But they did not flinch away from my fingers. And still I wanted to hurt her. I drew her to me roughly and crushed her soft lips with my lips. . . . She made no struggle or attempt at outcry; and suddenly and shamefully the burning anger and passion turned to pity in my heart. I freed her from my brutal embrace, and stepped back and staggered blindly onto the lumpy sward, dazed with shame.

"GOD forgive me!" I moaned. "Christ pity me!"

Sylvia came to me and steadied and held me with hands and arms and all her slender body.

She whispered: "For what, dear Mark?"

It was a tremulous sound, quivering on the verge of tears.

"For hurting you!" I cried. "For defiling you! I'm no better than the loathly knife-thrower—or the beastly madman!"

I sank to my knees and begged her forgiveness. I fumbled for and found her small hard hands and pressed them to my face, that she might feel my tears. She stooped low and spoke tenderly against my abject head.

"I am not hurt, dear Mark. You should have whipped me for speaking so of your good friend. But I meant no word of it, my dear. I am your friend too. I will never imperil your soul, which is more precious to me than my own. And you did not hurt or frighten me—or in any way offend me. But now you are breaking my heart, dear Mark—with your tears on my hands."

I blundered to my feet.

"Will you ever trust me again?"

"I have never distrusted you, poor boy."

She drew my face down to hers and brushed the tears from my eyes with tremulous lips.

Chapter Seven

THE CUTTHROAT PACKMAN

WE WENT away from the Mere of Herons, burdened with weapons and smoked wild meats. A few stars showed, among them a few known to me by name and position, thanks to Brother Ambrose; and so we held to the southward, in the general direction of Camelot. But the way was tough and obscure and our progress slow and stumbling. I went in front, fumbling; and Sylvia kept so close to my heels that she bumped against me frequently. After hours of it—two or three—we both were tottering from hunger and fatigue. Then I found a deep cleft between leaning rocks. It was roofed with sprawling ground-hemlock and with juniper and floored with dry moss. I made fire and soon built up a comforting and illuminating blaze; and by its wavering shine we discovered enough large gnawed bones of deer to tell us that wildcats or wolves had denned there in the past. I gathered and threw out the old bones while the damosel sliced smoked venison and bacon with my keenest knife. I gathered dry fern and heather and laid Sylvia's bed at the back of our retreat and my own at the mouth of it, with the fire between.

We ate many slices of the broiled meat, and wiped our fingers carefully on heather.

"See what I have!" said Sylvia.

She held it up. I recognized it as one of the leather bottles which the

mad old squire had set out at his solitary feast.

"It's not the one he guzzled from," she said.

She pressed it into my hands.

"After you, damosel," I said, politely.

"Nay, you drink first, dear Mark," she returned. "Your thirst is the greater—and I don't know what it is. It may be poison."

We laughed at that. We were very gay. I withdrew the wooden stopper and sniffed. I sipped? Old, strong mead. Honeydew. There was no mistaking it. Brother Ambrose was an expert at just such brewing. I sipped with more confidence, and passed the bottle back to Sylvia. Turn and turn about, we sipped and sipped. Sylvia's eyes sparkled. Our tongues wagged with wit and laughter. Now and then I placed fuel on the fire. Back and forth between us passed the leather bottle, losing weight slowly but surely. Sylvia sang a song about daffy-downillies, but I had to deny an urge to reply to kind, owing to the lack of appropriate words and a fitting air. Brother Ambrose had overlooked the lighter branches of my education.

But the thought came to me, like an inspiration, that I might dance for her in return for her merry ditty. Dancing, it seems, is a form of self-expression which comes naturally to the young; and I had often skipped and hopped for my own satisfaction, without instruction or encouragement even from Brother Ambrose, like the young of goats and mountain sheep. I was about to get to my feet and commence the artless performance, when my companion, bottle in hand, leaned forward suddenly above our failing fire and stared past me with terrified round eyes.

"Look! Quick! A great wolf!"

Her voice was shrill with horror.

I flung myself about-face and onto my feet in one violent, scrambling motion. I snatched up the handiest weapon—the dead jongleur's short sword—and plunged blindly forward to dispute the beast's passage at the mouth of our retreat. I did not see him. But what of that? The light was bad; and my own shadow, cast by the low fire behind me, was black before my eyes. I plunged through the narrow way, and out of its rocky jaws, stabbing and slashing fiercely at my own retreating shadow. Just outside; I lurched to an unsteady stop; and although the wolf was still invisible to my blinking eyes, I continued to hack and thrust and shout defiance. Then laughter rang in my ears, high and shrill and merry. I backed into the mouth of our shelter. With my left shoulder against one of the leaning rocks, I turned my head and looked within.

Sylvia was laughing. Seated there beyond the little fire, she shook and

swayed with laughter, and waved the leather bottle. I stood gaping, bewildered.

"O funny Mark!" she cried. "O dear silly brave Mark! There wasn't any wolf. Wolf—wolf—wolf! And there isn't any wolf!"

It seemed funny to me too; and I laughed. The more I laughed, the funnier it seemed to me. What, no wolf? My mirth almost overthrew me. And when the bottle fell from Sylvia's hands onto the red embers and the spilling liquor caught afire and set up a high blue flame, I was utterly overcome with the humor of it. My shoulder slipped, my knees folded, and I tumbled to the ground. I straightened my knees, rolled onto my back and closed my eyes. . . .

I was stiff with cold and damp with dew when I opened my eyes. Dawn was in the sky. I raised my head from the sod, only to drop it again, heavy as iron. Heavy and hot and painful. I felt it all over for bumps and cuts, but found neither. I wondered dully and painfully what could have happened to my poor head. There seemed to be something wrong with my stomach too. . . . The sky was brighter when I turned over onto my hands and knees and crawled back into the rock-walled shelter. The fire was a little mat of gray ashes with a twisted scrap of charred leather on it. I remembered the both of them. I looked across the ashes and saw Sylvia sleeping on her couch of heather and fern. Then I remembered how merry we had been, and wondered innocently if the unaccustomed food or the yet more unaccustomed drink had been the cause of it.

"Time we were on the road to Camelot," I muttered.

I subsided upon my own unruffled couch and slept once more.

IT WAS past noon by the time we were about and moving again. We moved slowly, placing our feet cautiously so as not to jolt our heads. Sylvia said that she was to be more pitied than me, for she had drunk more than I had.

"And so did Brother Ambrose, whenever he fermented wild honey," I said. "He never let me have more than one cup."

Sylvia began to laugh, but stopped because it hurt her head. She pressed her hands to her temples and eyes.

"That old Ambrose took better care of you than I do, dear Mark," she said, stumbling over tussocks.

She sat down on a mossy rock, still clapping her head.

"But I shall try to be a better guardian from now on, poor boy," she cried through her hands.

"I shall never leave more than one cup for you, in future—just like good Brother Ambrose."



I struggled feebly, in a strangled silence, and would have sunk lower but for the agonizing support of his hands.

She laughed a little and wept a little. "What ails you?" I asked.

"You looked so funny—made such a terrible jump—when I cried 'Wolf!' " she gasped.

Our progress was slow that afternoon. At dark, we slept where we fell. When I woke at dawn, I found Sylvia beside me with her bright head on my breast. I slid out from under gently, and pulled and bunched an armful of bracken and placed it beneath her un-

conscious head. She smiled sweetly in her sleep. I knelt to kiss her, but thought better of it.

"At that rate, we would never get clear of this wilderness," I muttered.

I sprang to my feet again. My head and eyes were painless and clear once more, and my heart was singing. The still air was chill; so I pulled heather and fern and covered my companion beneath a deep drift of the stuff, leaving only her head exposed. I bathed

my face and eyes at a tinkling ice-cold brook. The shallow wound on my cheek was cleanly healed. I made fire, heated flat stones and fried bacon and smoked venison. I had eaten half a dozen slices, and was still slicing and frying, when Sylvia flew out of her nest with a joyous cry, scattering heather and fern, and came skipping to break fast.

We traveled fast and far and gayly that day. The highest of the moun-

tains were behind us now. We saw a score of long-fleeced, white-faced sheep in a green glen, which looked larger and fatter to me than the wild mountain sheep I was accustomed to.

"They are tame sheep; and soon we shall see a shepherd and his dogs," said Sylvia.

I had heard of shepherds and dogs from Brother Ambrose, and had read of both, but had never seen any of either.

"There is a dog," she said, pointing a hand. "Come away before he scents us or sees us. They are very fierce in guarding their flocks. They are stronger and fiercer than wolves."

The beast stood at the far edge of the glen. He was as tall and long as any wolf I had ever seen. We slipped aside into a grove of firs without attracting his attention and continued on our way. Later we saw more tame sheep, and another dog, and a man in a sheepskin shirt and kilt. We held on our way, furtively. Sylvia whispered that the shepherds were as savage as their dogs. That night, our fire was only large enough to cook at; and we let it fail and fade out after we had eaten. Sylvia had a terror of these half-wild shepherds. We passed the night in a copse of holly and flowering may, with last year's fern and heather to keep us warm.

The two following days were without adventure; and then things began to happen to us:

"Hark!" whispered Sylvia, halting me with a hand on my arm.

I could hear nothing but the rattle and slobber of a small, swift stream beyond a bank on our left.

"Moaning and cursing," whispered Sylvia. "Somebody's hurt. Come cautiously, for it may be a beggar's trick."

WE ADVANCED by a narrow path; it twisted among rocks and bushes and dipped down to the stream. At this point the stream was very shallow, and dotted from shore to shore with stepping-stones. At the near end of the ford, at the edge of the quick water and within a few paces of where we halted and crouched, sat a man with his left leg stretched out before him and both his hands gripped about the knee of it. He moaned and groaned in agonized tones. He rocked his large body back and forth in time with his lamentable utterances. He was a big man, and the black hair of his head and face was long and streaked with gray. He wore woolen cloth and tanned leather. A wide-brimmed leather hat and an iron-shod staff lay beside him on the pebbles, and a large, bulging leather sack slumped lumpishly against a boulder near at hand.

"A packman," whispered Sylvia at my shoulder. "And a thieving rogue, for certain. I know the breed. As

wicked and tricky as jongleurs, and worse than gypsies. I don't like the look of him. Let us steal away, dear Mark, and cross the stream at another ford."

"But he is hurt," I protested. "Slipped on a wet rock and broke a leg, it seems. He is in great pain. And if we don't help him, what help will he find in this unpeopled region?"

"Then why is he here in this unpeopled region?" she retorted. "He is a packman—a peddler. Does an honest packman look for business where there are no people? I think he is in flight, and hiding from the scene of his crimes, like those murdering jongleurs."

"But we don't know that. And he is hurt."

"That's as may be."

"I shall help him."

"In that case, dear Mark, lend me one of your knives. Nay, your great staff will suit me better."

She took my staff from me.

"What do you fear?" I asked.

"Live and learn, dear Mark," she replied, speaking and smiling gently. "Had you seen as much of the wicked world as I have, you would not ask, dear innocent; and I did not love you like a little brother or my very own baby, I would let you learn the hard way, my pet."

I smiled, unruffled. This surprised me—and Sylvia too, I think. A few days before, I would have flared up with even less cause. Now I felt dotting amusement only. I descended the short bank to where the bagman sat groaning and gripping on his outstretched leg. Sylvia lagged five or six paces behind, limping and leaning on my staff as if about to drop with fatigue, although she had been as spry as a cricket only a minute before.

The stranger looked up at me. His dark eyes flickered a glance past me at my companion, then back to me. He twisted his bearded lips, as if in acute pain, and groaned miserably.

"Well met," he moaned. "Well come, brother."

His quick glance flickered over me, from my feet to the golden brooch in my cap.

"I have broken my leg at the knee, young sir, God help me!" he moaned on. "And I'm a poor man—with my living to make—and far from friends and home."

"Let me examine it," I said. "It may be a strain of the muscles only. I learned something of anatomy in my youth, from one of great experience."

He withdrew his gripping hands, which were remarkably large and sinewy and hairy, and exposed a puffed knee. I fingered the knee-cap and the joint. I had suffered just such an injury six or seven years before, and Brother Ambrose had cured it in a week with bandages of woolen cloth

and packs of moss all kept damp and cold with spring water.

"Nothing worse than a sprain," I said importantly; and still stooped above the knee, I told the sufferer how to treat it for a quick and complete recovery.

He listened attentively.

"God bless you, young sir," he said heartily.

And then, just as I was about to straighten my back, his hands flashed to my throat, and fingers like an eagle's talons gripped and crushed my windpipe. I struggled feebly, in a strangled silence, and sank to my knees. I would have sunk lower but for the agonizing support of his hands. I saw his eyes like black flames, as through a mist of smoke and streaming stars. I heard a cry, as from a great distance, and then the crashing and bursting of mighty waters on grinding rocks.

I came gasping back to air and life with the splashing of cold water in my face. I opened wet eyes and saw Sylvia's face staring down at me. After a few dazed moments I sat up, supported by her slender arms and tender breast. I looked at the treacherous packman. He lay sprawled face-down on smooth rock and wet sand, with his feet in the singing stream. His shaggy head was within arm's-length of me. I gave it one glance and shut my eyes.

"Who did it?" I whispered.

I felt Sylvia's lips on my forehead.

"Not Brother Ambrose," she answered softly.

I knew who had done it, and what with—my iron-shod staff. I knew that my corpse, instead of the devilish bagman's, would be sprawling here now, but for this girl's wisdom and strength and courage.

"You have only poor Sylvia to guide and protect you now, dear Mark," she added, with a tremor between tears and laughter in her voice.

My throat still ached from the bagman's fingers.

"I owe you my life," I croaked. "I'm a fool! I'm a clod! But it is yours. I would die a hundred deaths for you."

She pressed her face to my shoulder and wept. I put an arm around her and pressed my lips to the top of her golden head; and there beside the dead rogue and the singing water we clung together.

"Never let me go, dear Mark!"

"Never. So help me God!"

"Spoken like a Christian gentleman," said a slow voice with a note of delicate mockery.

Chapter Eight

"YOU MAY CALL ME DAME CARMEL"

I LOOKED up, and beheld a woman on a small white horse halted within a spear's-length of us. But this was neither a creature of the kind I had

seen at the jongleurs' campfire nor a girl like Sylvia. (This I thought) may be one of those ladies of which Brother Ambrose had spoken sometimes, but always with a reserve that had fretted me, in his instructive talks of courts and castles; and the small horse, which is certainly not a wild pony, must be a jennet.

The lady wore a flowing skirt, and a high, pointed headdress, and a band of flashing stones around her neck.

"Don't be afraid," I whispered to Sylvia. "Look, it is nothing to fear. It is only a lady, I think."

SYLVIA turned her head sharply to look. Then she let go of me and I let go of her, and we got to our feet. Now the lady was looking at the sprawled corpse, leaning forward and narrowing her eyes; and the jennet was staring at it with pocked eyes and distended nostrils.

"Who is it?" asked the lady.

Sylvia answered her before I could utter a word.

"A knave. And a dead one. A rogue of a bagman. He begged for help, and then grabbed Mark by the throat."

The lady shifted her eyes to Sylvia, and opened them wide.

"Good riddance," she said, but her voice was still low and smooth. "These cutthroat packmen are like a plague of dirty flies. But who killed him, may I ask?"

I meant to take the blame for that deed, if any blame were attached to it, but Sylvia was too quick for me again.

"I killed him," she cried, clearly and defiantly. "I killed him to save Mark's life, even as Mark slew the jongleur for my sake."

The other regarded her curiously, and smiled slowly.

"You speak like a lady," she said.

"I am a lady," said Sylvia.

And then I found my tongue.

"As I am ready to prove to any varlet or gentleman who questions it, with staff or sword!" I cried; and I glanced around at my scattered weapons, and for an armed man of some kind, any kind, to use them on.

The lady looked at me and laughed.

"And you speak like a learned clerk," she said.

"Which he is!" cried Sylvia. "And a gentleman too!"

"God's wounds!" exclaimed the lady. And then she said "Gramercy!" and laughed again.

Sylvia moved one step toward the small white horse. Her slender shoulders were straight, and her bright head was high.

"Montclair is my name, and Gyles of Montclair is my father's name," she said.

The lady, still smiling, looked us both over again, from head to foot.

"And stolen by wicked gypsies?" she suggested softly.

"Yes," said Sylvia.

The lady's laughter tinkled again.

"'Tis God's truth!" I cried; and had she been a man, I would have unhorsed her with my empty hands and slapped her face.

"And you too?" she asked, arching her brows and curving her lips at me. "Are you too a victim of the wicked gypsies?"

"I have never set eyes on one of that people," I told her, none too courteously. "I was carried to the mountains when I was so young that my memory holds nothing of the event, by my noble and long-suffering guardian, good Brother Ambrose."

She interrupted me.

"What Ambrose?"

I answered that I knew of no other, save only the saint.

"Tell me the whole story, boy!" she exclaimed impatiently, her voice gone thin and hard.

I was about to reply that only Brother Ambrose and Sylvia could speak to me like that, and my dear guardian had but rarely done so, when Sylvia turned her head and smiled at me.

"Please tell her all you know about both of us, dear Mark," she whispered.

So I told what I have already set down on these sheets of parchment, but with fewer words and poetical embellishments. The lady listened attentively; and though she often twitched her eyebrows and gloved hands as if with impatience, she interrupted my narrative only twice.

"How big was that bull?" she asked; and I had to tell again that the wild white bull which Brother Ambrose had seized by the horns and overthrown was the biggest and fiercest I had ever seen.

Later, she cried out, "Your friend Ambrose could have taught you better than that!" and laughed with a bitter shaping of her lips.

Her eyes, still fixed upon my face, took on a far-away look.

"And he might have been better employed than in wrestling wild bulls—but more periously, be assured of that," she added.

I concluded my story with the episode of the treacherous bagman. The lady glanced at the corpse with a grimace of distaste and away again with a quick shudder. She gazed searchingly at my companion, who gave her look for look. She returned her scrutiny to me.

"You both have honest faces, so why should I doubt your words," she said. "I have heard the name Montclair, but know nothing of the family. And I have read of just such fools as your poor Ambrose, boy. Now pick up your swords and follow me. And you too, girl. I'll send a fellow to bury that carrion."

She was about to wheel the jennet—she had its head up and pulled halfway around—when Sylvia cried: "Who are you to tell us to follow you, good dame? Or to command us in any matter?"

They regarded one another a long time in silence; and I looked to and fro between the richly robed lady on her high saddle, and Sylvia afoot, bare-legged and tattered, with wonder and a flicker of apprehension. The stranger was the first to break that silence; and her glance wavered for an instant as she spoke.

"You may call me Dame Carmel."

"That does not answer my question," said Sylvia.

The lady's glance wavered again, and all her face became as red as her bright red lips and the bright red spot high on each cheek, which had caught my attention and pricked my curiosity at first sight.

"Insolent!" she cried; and her silky-smooth voice was shrill with anger.

She raised her slender whip as if to strike Sylvia, but I was too quick for her. With one leap I was beside her, and had her gloved wrist in my right hand. She did not struggle to get it free, but glared at me with white flames of fury in her eyes. I met that hateful fire without blinking. It cooled and clouded, and her eyes took on a baffled look. Then the blood ebbed from her face, leaving pallor everywhere save for the small splashes of red high on either cheek and on the carmine lips; and suddenly those lips quivered, and I saw the glint of tears. I loosed her wrist and stepped back. She brushed the back of her hand across her eyes.

Then she spoke brokenly, with her face averted.

"I do not command you—but beg you, of your kindness, to come with me—and partake of my hospitality."

She completed the turning of the jennet, and moved off slowly. I gave Sylvia a questioning glance.

"That was fairly spoken, methinks," I said hopefully.

NODDING her agreement, Sylvia smiled, took up my iron-shod staff and gave the deadly end of it a few cleansing dips in the quick stream. I recovered my swords: the short one that had belonged to the jongleur, and the knightly two-handed weapon with which the late Sir Bevan had pursued the Questing Beast.

"And I know you are hungry, dear Mark," said Sylvia.

We set out briskly on the track of the slow-pacing jennet. Dame Carmel looked back at us with nods and smiles.

"If she thought us rag-tag and bobtail vagabonds, she saw her mistake when you grabbed her arm," said Sylvia with relish.

I let that pass, feeling somewhat ashamed of it.

Sylvia asked: "Do you think she is pretty, dear Mark?"

I shook my head, but doubtless without assurance, for I did not know just what I thought of that lady's appearance.

"But prettier than me," said Sylvia. I denied that with some heat.

"But that might be her diamond collar and silken gown and painted lips," said Sylvia.

"Painted?" I cried in astonishment. My companion laughed and called me a poor innocent, and was about to embrace me when Dame Carmel looked back again with more nods and smiles.

"Save your astonishment till we reach Camelot," said Sylvia, knowingly.

Dame Carmel drew rein; and in a minute we were beside her. She pointed ahead with the little whip.

"That is my house," she said.

Sylvia regarded it with polite but calm interest, but I cried out with wonder at it. It was a great house of stone and hewn timbers and purple slates. It had two round towers, high and battlemented for watch and ward, such as I had heard of from Brother Ambrose and read about in several of his books.

"And all this is my demesne, all around and farther than you can see," added Dame Carmel, with a circular motion of hand and whip.

WE were met by a score of people of the place before we reached the base of the hill and the outer wall of tree-trunks and boulders. The foremost of these was an elderly man in leather; but by the gold inlay of the haft of his dagger, the plume in his cap and marks on the front of his jerkin where a breastplate had rubbed it, I knew him for a gentleman, and guessed him for the lady's squire and captain. She called him Jorriall.

"Good Jorriall, there is a dead knave beside the Kelpie ford who will please me better half a league back among the knolls and under a ton of rocks," she told him.

He bowed and spoke a few words to one of the fellows at his shoulder; whereupon three of them withdrew. His leathery face was expressionless.

"Friend Jorriall, this young lady is the Damosel Sylvia of Montclair, who was given to gypsies by a wicked stepmother, sold by the gypsies to wicked jongleurs and rescued from the jongleurs by this learned young clerk who is called Mark of the Lake," she said gravely.

The squire bowed to Sylvia, without any word or look of surprise or extraordinary curiosity. His face suggested nothing more than polite interest. Then he looked at me; and

for a fraction of a second, that still face was all alive. It was blank again in the blink of an eye.

Chapter Nine

A KING COMES HOME

I WAS alone in a fair chamber. I sat on the edge of a princely bed, with my swords on the velvet coverlet beside me, and my iron-shod staff on the floor at my feet. My head was in a whirl. The door opened, and the young page who had led me here but a few minutes since entered again. His name was Gervase. He had a silver cup in one hand, and various garments draped over the other arm.

"With the Queen's compliments," he said, giving me the cup.

"Queen?" I cried.

"That's nothing," he jeered. "Kings and queens are common as brambleberries in this realm of Britain. It's easy seen you've lived with mountaintain sheep an' unicorns ever since you were a baby. But drink the wine, Mark. We could give none better to our overlord Arthur Pendragon himself, for it is from the best butt in the cup."

I drained the cup to the last drop.

"I have known her to deny it to knights and earls," said Gervase, eying me curiously.

"About this queen? Do you mean Dame Carmel?" I asked, feeling the benefit of the wine.

He nodded and said: "Queen Carmel of the Marches."

He tossed his burden of garments on the bed.

"Help yourself," he said. "Some are mine; some are old Jorriall's; and some belonged to the late king. Nothing is too good for you, it seems."

I examined the things, and confessed that I knew nothing of fine clothes. At that, Gervase's manner became more friendly.

"Try the shirts first," he advised. "Strip to the waist. Here is something of mine that could not be matched this side Camelot."

He held up a garment of silk for my inspection and looked at me. I was naked down to my bullskin belt. He stared and stared, and cried out an oath unbecoming his tender years and his delicate appearance.

"What ails you?" I asked.

He advanced a pace, but with an air of wariness, extended an arm and a stiff forefinger and prodded my left shoulder, but cautiously.

"What ails it?" I asked.

He muttered, "No offense, good Mark," and prodded my other shoulder and the muscles of my chest.

"Remarkable!" he exclaimed. "Astounding!"

"If I start prodding you in return, Master Popinjay, you'll be truly astonished," I said.

He skipped backward two paces. "No offense!" he cried. "But pardonable and admiring amazement. You were but a well-grown youth in your jerkin, but out of it you are a full-grown man."

"Give me that shirt!" I cried. "Too small," he said. "Calm yourself, good Mark. We must find something else."

We tried all the garments Gervase had brought before I was fully attired in linen and silk and buskins of soft red leather; and even then I was pinched and constrained here and there. Only the grand boots were big enough, and they were too big.

"Can this be that mountaintain young Mark of the Lake?" cried Gervase, turning me around and around. "Now you cut a royal figure, my clerly friend. And rightly so. Save for worthy Squire Jorriall's trunk-hose, you are garbed from heels to head from the royal, even if somewhat outmoded, wardrobe of the late lamented King Ban of the Marches. Nothing of mine had the honor of being big enough for Your Majesty."

"I feel like a fool, and doubtless look it," I said. "A gentleman I am, with Brother Ambrose's word for it—but why all this? Why does your Queen Carmel treat me with this high consideration? Me, poor Mark, knowing neither father or mother or any friend save Brother Ambrose, until I found Sylvia. I don't understand it. What manner of person is this Queen of the Marches?"

"All honey or fury or melancholy," said the page. "She keeps less court than some of the lords and knights who hold their lands at her pleasure, and yet Lucifer could not show more pride upon occasion. They tell me she was a great beauty in her day."

"Is she not a beauty now?" I asked. Gervase stared at me as if he doubted his ears.

"But she's old!" he protested. "Dame Rosamond says she has been a widow fifteen years, and that she was a grown woman with a big baby before the King was killed."

THE door opened again; Jorriall entered, this time. Now he was dressed in silk and velvet. He stood and gazed at me; and all the life of his still, dark face seemed to be in his yet darker eyes.

"The Queen wants you," he said; and though he did not turn his head or even shift his glance, the page picked up the empty cup and the garments which had failed to meet my dimensions, and sauntered from the chamber.

The elderly squire came closer to me. "Who are you?" he asked.

"If you expect an answer, you will have to put the question more courteously, my good sir," I said.

"Hah—my mistake!" he exclaimed. His gaze wavered but came back.

"You are right, young sir," he went on, but in milder tones, "and I beg you to forgive my bluntness, which I come by honestly, and to tell me who you are."

"When a man has never heard the name of his father or his mother, how is he to know who he is, Sir Squire?" I said.

He considered that gravely for a moment and shook his head.

"But surely you told the Queen something," he objected.

I told him what I had told the lady on the jennet, but in fewer words. He twitched with excitement, and finally grasped me by both shoulders.

"I see it!" he exclaimed, but his voice was no louder than a whisper. "You remember nothing before that mountain life. You were too young. Fifteen years—nay, more than that by two, by three months. You were but an infant, fifteen years and three months ago. That's it! Hah!"

"What?" I asked; and as his fingers were pinching into my shoulders like iron hooks, I put my hands up and removed them.

NOTHING daunted, he laid hold of the breast of my royal borrowed jerkin.

"Your guardian—this Ambrose—what shape and size of a man is he?"

Suspicion flashed in me and then burned clearly and steadily. My good and gentle friend had fled from the world. He had been in peril. But he had taken me, a squalling infant, into exile and hiding with him. Had the peril been to me? Or to both of us? And what manner of peril could it have been—could it be—to keep that good and brave and mighty man in hiding all these years? And did this hired captain think to frighten and confuse me into discovering him? And why? What did this Jorrill know or suspect, to excite all this questioning and conjecturing? I felt an enveloping anger.

"Who are you to question me?" I whispered back at him, lowering and advancing my face toward his. "What is your concern with my friend's size and shape, or with my own age? If the Queen wants to know these things she—"

He let go his hold on me as if the fine stuff of the dead king's jerkin had suddenly caught afire.

"Nay, not that!" he cried. "Say nothing to her of this—my idle questioning—I beg you! I charge you! It is nothing. Forget that I asked. Come with me now, good boy—and keep your mouth shut!"

I sneered at him.

"Queen Carmel could have told you Brother Ambrose's size and shape, for she had heard it from me on our way



"But murder was not in his heart. He struck bare-handed for pity and love of me."

from the ford. And as for keeping my mouth shut, good Jorrill—mind your own mouth, lest you find it choked with a churchyard sod!"

He stepped back and dropped his right hand to the jeweled hilt of his dagger. I shifted my weight a little for a jump in any direction, and fisted my low-hanging right hand, but did not shift my eyes from his eyes. And there I saw the red intent to kill cool to uncertainty and dim to fear.

He whispered: "Not a word of this to the queen, I beg of you, good Master Mark."

"A quick change of tune!" I sneered. "And all for fear of your own royal mistress. But to me she seems a kind and right generous dame."

He lowered his eyes and bunched his brows and stood there scowling as if in deep and difficult thought.

"You misjudge me," he muttered. "I was not myself; I am distraught."

He looked behind him at the half-open door by which he had come in, hesitated for a few twitching seconds, then turned and ran to it, paused for

a moment to look out past and around the edge of it, set a hand to the great latch of iron and stepped back, shutting oak and iron tightly in place, but without sound. He faced the room again.

"Hah!" he cried.

For I was not where or as he had last seen me. Now I stood within a pace of the bed, and held the short sword of the dead jongleur in my hand.

"You misjudge me," he muttered, With quick fingers he loosed his belt of fine Turkey leather, and with a quick swing of the arm he tossed it, sheathed dagger and all, to the floor at my feet. I was agreeably surprised, but still suspicious. I did not throw my sword away.

"It is your fault if I misjudge you," I said grimly. "And what hocus-pocus is this?" I asked. "I learn the world's ways fast. What of the hidden knife in your breast?"

At that, he cried out in a voice of hurt reproach, and fell to beating his front and sides with open hands to

show that no weapon was concealed there.

"So be it," I said unpleasantly. "Have done with the mummery now, and say your say."

He advanced halfway to me and stood there.

"You charge me with being afraid of Queen Carmel," he said. "It is the truth, young sir—but my fear of her is not for myself. I have served her long and faithfully without fear. But it is my Christian duty to warn you, young sir, even at the cost of my word of honor and oaths of fealty. You are in hourly deadly peril here from that queen. Remain till tomorrow's dawn, and you will not see tomorrow's sun."

I WAS dazed and daunted; because of the creeping chill at my heart, my anger flared again, and I warned him to have done with his unseemly joking.

"Joking?" he sighed. "Look at me, poor lad. Nay, 'tis no joke."

I looked; the flurry of vain anger died in me, and terror gripped me.

"And Sylvia? Is she in peril too?" I cried. "What of her? Where is she now?"

"Not so loud!" he protested.

He came nearer.

"I know nothing of that damosel," he whispered, fierce and fast. "The Queen pets her now—but that may mean no more than her petting of you. I don't know who she is—she's nothing to me—but you I know. Harken to me now! Take heed of every word!"

He came yet nearer; and I listened like one spellbound.

"She had a lover when she was a damosel. He was a knight, but poor—a seventh son. She married King Ban of the Marches; and within the year, that knight came from the court at Camelot and swore fealty to King Ban. The Queen gave birth to a son. When that child was in its third year, the King—he was in his cups and had been listening to a jealous lady of the household—suddenly accused his queen and that young knight of adultery, and disowned the infant. The knight struck him with a bare fist and fled with the infant. The King died of that blow—of a broken neck—but not before he had retracted that charge. For fifteen years and some months nothing was seen or heard of that knight or that child."

Jorrill paused, regarding me with narrowed eyes.

"What is this to me?" I whispered.

"And she is Queen," he went on. "She has ruled the Marches all these years. She has had other lovers, and other babes, 'tis rumored; but now she plans to marry again."

"What is this to me?" I asked again.

"Ambrose was that knight's name," he answered, and flicked his tongue

along his thin lips. "Sir Ambrose. Brother Ambrose. A man of might, and yet a learned clerk."

"I am his son?"

"Nay, the King retracted that."

"But I am her son?"

He nodded.

"Then why does she wish me harm?"

"You are the King. She plans to wed her latest lover, with King Arthur's sanction—unless she takes a fancy to yet another before the Overlord's permission comes from Camelot. In either case she is still the Queen of the Marches—unless the true King should come and claim his heritage."

"I don't understand this, but I think you lie!"

I slapped his face with my left hand, seized him by the throat with my right and flung him to the floor. I was about to stoop and raise him for another fling when—

The Queen stood on the threshold of the open door. She came toward me, smiling. She did not so much as glance at Jorrill, where he crawled along the floor. I did not move. When she was nearer, I saw tears in her eyes and sliding down the white and red of her cheeks. She came close and put her arms around my neck and drew my face down to her lips. Her tears wet my cheek, and her lips moved against it.

"Well spoken—and well struck, my son."

I had nothing but confusion in my head; and having nothing to do with my arms, and being somewhat off balance, I put them around her. So we stood embraced for minutes; but when the cramp in my bowed neck became unbearable, I had to straighten it; and then I saw that Jorrill was gone from the room, and his belt and dagger with him.

"That squire has gone!" I exclaimed. She removed her face from my breast and looked around.

"He will not return," she whispered. "He can do you no deadly mischief now: nor me, with his lies!"

I remembered the murder in his half-shut eyes.

"Why does he hate me, who never saw him before today?" I asked.

"It is your father's son he hates. It was he, poor fool, who told the King—"

She looked up at me through welling tears, her carmine lips parted and trembling, and all her face and brow and throat as red as the painted spots on her cheeks. My heart warmed and softened to her; and I knew the emotion for love, though it did not flame and sing, like my love for Sylvia.

"His tongue was foul with lies, so I struck him," I said.

She whispered: "That I am your mother is no lie."

"Then what of me? God's wounds! Who am I?"

"You are the King."

"Did Brother Ambrose kill my father?"

"Nay, he killed the King. But murder was not in his heart. He struck bare-handed—for pity and love of me. The sin was mine: but be merciful in your judgment, for I have loved only him and our little son all these weary years—though I thought you both lost to me forever."

She clung to me again; and again I kissed her painted lips.

"And what of sin and kisses now, Saint Mark?" cried a strange-sounding voice from the threshold of the open door.

I raised my head and looked; and for a heartbeat I did not know the vision flaming there in gold and ermine and ice-green fire for my raggedy companion of the mountains.

"This lady—this queen—is my mother," I stammered.

Queen Carmel turned her face toward Sylvia without removing her head from the hollow of my left shoulder.

"Come here, sweet fool," she said. "There is room here for both of us—sweetheart and poor old mother."

She made a pitiful sound of sobbing laughter.

"Brother Ambrose is my father," I said to Sylvia. "Which makes me a bastard," I added.

"But King Ban withdrew that charge—and now you are the King," sobbed Queen Carmel.

Then Sylvia cried: "What do I care what he is—king or knight or poor clerk—anything but a jongleur!—so long as he is mine?"

SHE ran to me; and so it was that I had both of them in my arms when Gervase the page appeared on the scene. He halted and gawked.

"What now?" asked the Queen.

"Old Jorrill—he's dead, ma'am," stammered Gervase. "Of a broken neck. Captain Jorrill, ma'am. It was a big bearded rogue in wild skins. He asked to be brought to you, ma'am—at the buttery hatch. And Jorrill was there and cried an oath and drew a knife on him. And he hit the squire with a bare fist—just once—and threw four archers into the yard. Now he battles against a dozen and shouts a war-cry. Hark! Strike straight! Strike hard!"

The Queen twisted away from me, knocked Gervase out of her way and was gone. Her screams of mingled endearments and threats rang back to us.

"'Tis Brother Ambrose!" I cried.

"I've heard him shout it at boar and bull—Strike straight! Strike hard! Comel!"

But the battle was over and my father had my mother in his arms when Sylvia and I got there.

An Uprysing in Russia

{ & How it was put downe }

From 'The Ambassage of M. Giles Fletcher... sent from her Majestie to Theodor the Emperor of Russia, Anno 1588.' To be read at large in Richard Hakluyt's 'Principall Navigations of the English Nation,' here freshly decorated by Peter Wells, a common Man himself.

The next in greatnes ... is the citie Novograd: where was committed {as the Russe saith} the memorable warre so much spoke of in stories of the Scythians servants, that tooke armes against their masters: which they report in this sort: viz. That the Boiarens or gentlemen of Novograd & the territory about {which only are souldiers after the discipline of those countries} had war with the Tartars Which being wel performed & ended by them, they returned homewards. Where they understood by the way that their... bondslaves whom they left at home, had in their absence possessed their townes, lands, houses, wives and all. At which newes being somewhat amased, and yet disdeining the villany of their servants, they made the more speed home: and so not far from Novograd met them in warlike maner marching against them. Whereupon advising what was best to be done, they agreed all to set upon them with no other shew of weapon but with their horse whips {which as their maner is every man rideth withal} to put them in remembrance of their servile condition, thereby to terrifie them, & abate their courage. And so marching on & lashing al together with their whips in their hands they gave the onset. Which seemed so terrible in the eares of their villaines, and stroke such a sense into them of the smart of the whip which they had felt before, that they fled altogether like sheepe before the drivers. In memory of this victory the Novogradians ever since have stamped their coine {which they cal a dingoe Novogrodskoy currant through al Russia} with the figure of a horsman shaking a whip aloft in his hand.



Under Penalty of

Chapter One

ONE EYE VERSUS ONE LEG

THE first message was a colored postcard of the Emperor's palace at Addis Ababa, with an Abyssinian stamp on it and these words:

I'll catch up with you yet, you bastard. Under penalty of death, do you remember that?

Your old friend, Jules.

This was seven months ago. As a matter of fact, Oscar Labro had received the card just a few weeks after the marriage of his daughter. At this time he still used to get up at five o'clock in the morning to go out fishing from his boat. When he came back at about eleven, the postman had usually gone by and left the mail on the shelf of the coat-rack in the hall.

At this same hour Madame Labro did up the rooms on the second floor. Had she come downstairs while the card was lying there on the shelf in plain sight with its conspicuous coloring? She did not mention it, in spite of his close scrutiny of her face. And had the postman, who plied the trade of a carpenter in the afternoon, read it? And what about Mademoiselle Marthe, the postmistress?

Monsieur Labro still went fishing, but he came back earlier, and by ten o'clock, before the postman started on his rounds, he was at the post office, waiting for Mademoiselle Marthe to finish sorting the mail. He looked at her through the grating:

"Anything for me?"

"Just the newspaper and some advertisements. Oh, yes, a letter from your daughter."

Apparently she found time to look at the envelopes, to read what was written on them and to identify handwriting.

Two weeks later there was another card, and the postmistress said with the greatest of ease as she handed it to him:

"Oh! It's from that madman."

Evidently she had read the first card. The second one came not from Abyssinia but from Djibouti, and the picture showed the city's white railway station, flooded with sunshine.

Don't lose hope, you low-life! We'll meet again. Under penalty of death, you know. Greetings from

Jules.

"Some friend who's a great joker, I suppose."

"It's a poor joke, if you ask me," he replied.

Jules was coming closer. His third card, which arrived a month later, was a view of the harbor of Port Said:

*You're not forgotten, never fear!
Under penalty of death, old man.
You know what that means. As ever
Jules.*

From this day on, Monsieur Labro stopped fishing altogether. From Port Said to Marseilles is only four or five days' by boat; and Porquerolles is only a few hours from Marseilles by train or bus.

Every morning thereafter Monsieur Labro came out of the house about eight o'clock in the morning in a dressing-gown over his pajamas and a pair of slippers. The village square of Porquerolles is one of the most charming in the world, with the houses painted in pastel colors around it, green, blue, yellow and pink. And Monsieur Labro's house was the prettiest one on the square; it stood out at a distance by virtue of the red geraniums that bloomed all around the porch.

As he smoked his first pipe of the day, Monsieur Labro went down toward the harbor—that is, he walked no more than a hundred yards, turned to the right in front of the hotel, and he was at the edge of the water. He looked, as he strolled along, like the most peaceful and solid sort of citizen, a carefree man of a certain age who had retired with a comfortable pension. Quite a group of men used to meet down by the wharf at about the same hour every morning. The returning fishermen were unloading their catch and mending their nets. The manager of the cooperative store

was waiting with his push-cart, and the porter from the Hôtel du Langoustier, at the other end of the island, came with a wagon drawn by a donkey. On this island of only four hundred inhabitants almost everyone was known by his first name. Labro was almost the only one to be called "Monsieur," because he didn't work for a living, had money and for four years had been mayor.

"You're not going fishing, Monsieur Labro?"

He mumbled something indistinct by way of reply. At this hour the *Cormorant*, which had left Porquerolles half an hour before, was just landing at the Cape of Giens, on the other side of the glittering expanse of water that separated the island from the mainland of France—the "continent," as the local people called it. The boat was visible in the distance as a tiny white spot. According to the length of time it stayed tied up on the other side, one could tell whether it was taking aboard a lot of passengers and goods, or whether it would come back almost empty.

For a hundred and sixty-eight mornings in succession Monsieur Labro had kept this mysterious tryst. Every morning he had seen the *Cormorant* pull away from Giens and set out against the sun, toward the island. He had seen it grow larger and larger as it drew near until he could distinguish the human figures on the deck. Toward the end one could pick up the single faces, and shouts were exchanged between the passengers and those on shore, as the boat made ready to dock. The manager of the cooperative went aboard to unload his boxes and barrels; the postman piled up the mail-bags on his wheelbarrow, and tourists began to take snapshots while they followed the hotel porter.

A hundred and sixty-eight mornings! Under penalty of death, as Jules had put it!

Just beside the docking space set aside for the *Cormorant* lay Monsieur Labro's boat, attached by a hawser that was taut or slack according to the movement of the sea. Monsieur Labro had had it built on the mainland, and it was the tidiest fishing craft you could imagine, so painstakingly varnished and so completely trimmed with brass and glass that it was nicknamed the *Showcase*.

A remarkable mystery novel-ette by the famous French author of the Inspector Maigret stories.

by GEORGES
SIMENON

Death



"Drink up your wine. . . . Under penalty of death, eh? I'm not taking that back."

Month after month, for years on end, Monsieur Labro had fitted it out with every possible gadget to make it comfortable and pleasing to the eye. Although the boat measured only fifteen feet from stern to stern, he had built a cabin on it where a man could stand upright, a cabin with cross-barred windows.

For a hundred and sixty-eight days he had not gone out in his boat. Every day he had come down to the wharf in his dressing-gown and slippers and followed the postman's wheelbarrow back to the square, in order to be the first one to get the morning mail.

He had to wait nearly two months for the fourth card, which was postmarked from Alexandria:

Don't give me up for lost, you old stick. Under penalty of death, more than ever. Damned hot here.

Jules.

What could the fellow be doing along the way? And what was his occupation in life, anyhow? What sort was he? How old? At least fifty, since that was the age of Monsieur Labro.

Next came Naples, and then Genoa. He must be traveling on slow freighters. But why did he stop over several weeks in every port?

On my way, you rascal. Under penalty of death, of course.

Jules.

The following card had a Portuguese stamp. So Jules hadn't stopped at Marseilles; he seemed to be making a detour; in fact, he was farther away than before.

Ouch—Bordeaux! He was closer again, an overnight journey by rail. But the next two postcards were from Boulogne and Antwerp.

Don't fret, dearie. There's plenty of time. Under penalty of death.

Jules.

"He's a funny one, that friend of yours," said the postmistress, who had begun to watch out for the cards. Did she talk about them to other people?

Now, at last, on a beautiful Wednesday morning, when the sea was smooth as glass, without a ripple on the enchanting blue water, things suddenly came to a climax.

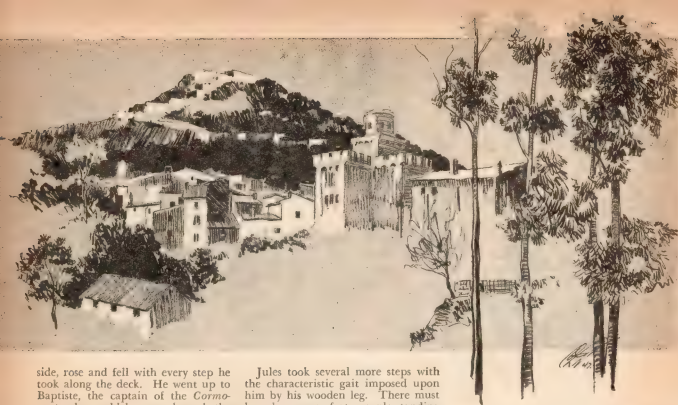
Jules was there! Labro was sure of it, when the *Cormorant* was still more than a mile away from the wharf and looked no larger than a toy boat. There was a dark shadow at the bow, like a carved ornamental figure, a shadow which even at this distance seemed enormous. For some reason or other

Labro had always imagined the man as very big. And now he was growing bigger and bigger. He stood motionless above the prow as it cut through the water, and the spray made him seem to have a mustache of silver.

For the space of a few seconds the former mayor of Porquerolles took off his dark glasses, which he kept on his bedside table at night and put on the first thing in the morning. While he wiped the clouded lenses, it was evident that he had only one good eye. The other, half closed, had long been out of service. He put his glasses back with a slow, almost solemn gesture, and puffed mechanically at his cold pipe.

Labro himself was tall and well built; he had a powerful frame, but he had grown somewhat stout. The man at the bow of the *Cormorant* was even taller and heavier. He was wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, lightweight tan trousers and a black alpaca jacket. The full, formless cut of his clothes and his extraordinary immobility added to his stature.

When the boat was near enough for every detail to stand out plainly, the stranger moved at last, as if he were stepping off a pedestal. His right shoulder, and in fact his whole right



side, rose and fell with every step he took along the deck. He went up to Baptiste, the captain of the *Cormorant*, who could be seen through the window of his glass-enclosed cabin. Labro could see the stranger's lips moving, and only wished he could hear the sound of his voice. The stranger jerked his head toward the group of people on the wharf, and Baptiste stretched out his hand and pointed to Labro, no doubt saying at the same time:

"There he is."

Then Baptiste's forefinger pointed to the *Showcase*, while he probably added:

"And there's his boat."

The men on the wharf were going through their usual actions and saying the same things they said every day. The hawser was thrown out and wound around its bitt. The *Cormorant* chugged backward and then drew up alongside. Meanwhile the stranger waited, motionless, and appeared to be looking at nothing in particular.

In order to come down the gang-plank, he had to raise his right leg high in the air, and anyone could see that it was a wooden stump, which tapped along the wharf. He looked back at the boat while a sailor slid down an old and apparently very heavy trunk, which had received such hard treatment during its long career that now it was held together with a rope.

Monsieur Labro stood stock-still, as if he were a rabbit hypnotized by a snake. The two men, one of them minus an eye and the other minus a leg, were within a few yards of each other, and there was a certain physical resemblance between them. They were of the same age and build, and seemed equally matched in strength.

Jules took several more steps with the characteristic gait imposed upon him by his wooden leg. There must have been some forty people standing around: a large number of fishermen; the manager of the cooperative; Maurice, the proprietor of the "Noah's Ark" restaurant, who was expecting supplies; some casual onlookers, and a little girl in red sucking at a green candy.

After Jules had come to a stop he pulled out of his pocket an enormous knife with a guard on it, which he seemed to caress with his fingers before he opened it. Then he leaned over. He must have lost his leg right up to the hip, because he had to bend over double like a puppet. Labro looked at him through his dark glasses as if he were thunderstruck and oblivious to what was happening. On this ideally beautiful day, among the murmur of familiar sounds, he could think of nothing but the words: "*Under penalty of death.*"

THE *Showcase's* hawser was coiled up on the wharf. With one stroke of his monstrous big knife, Jules cut through it, and the boat jumped forward a little before it drifted out on the calm water.

Everyone looked at the two of them, the man with but one eye and the man with the wooden leg. And as the spectators looked, they had a vague feeling that accounts of some sort had to be settled between them.

The suddenness and absurdity of the stranger's gesture left everyone dumfounded. Only the little girl in red burst into uncontrolled laughter.

The man with the wooden leg stood up straight, in apparent satisfaction. He looked around him contentedly while he closed his big knife. When

a fisherman tried to catch the drifting boat with a boathook, all he said was: "Let it go, friend."

There was no hardness or malice in his voice. But he spoke so positively that the fisherman gave up his attempt, and no one else tried to recapture the *Showcase*—particularly, as Monsieur Labro hastened to back up the order with one of his own:

"Let it go, Vial."

The onlookers noticed something else out of the ordinary: One-Eye and One-Leg had almost exactly the same tone of voice, and both of them had a pronounced Southern accent, which branded them as natives of the Midi. Labro himself, whose forehead was covered with perspiration, had observed this similarity and was deeply affected by it.

Three steps—four steps forward. . . . The shoulder and hip swung out; the wooden leg tapped; and the stranger's voice rang out again with a sound that might almost have been hearty and joyful:

"Hello, Oscar!"

Labro did not take his pipe out of his mouth. For a few moments he seemed completely petrified.

"Here I am, you see!"

Around the two men hung an atmosphere of suspended motion. Then the man with the dark glasses managed to murmur deep down in his throat:

"Come on up to my house."

"Aren't you going to welcome me any less stiffly than that?"

Silence. . . . Labro's Adam's-apple bobbed up and down, and his pipe trembled.

"Do come up, old man!"

"There we are! That's better!"

The stranger examined his host from head to foot, stuck out his hand and touched his pajamas, then pointed to his slippers:

"You're a late riser, aren't you? Not dressed yet!"

Labro seemed to be on the point of stammering an apology.

"Never mind. That doesn't matter. Look here, little man over there. . . . Yes, you, the chef."

He was beckoning to Maurice, the proprietor of the Noah's Ark, who was, indeed, exceedingly short and had on a chef's white apron.

"Have my trunk taken up to your place and give me the best room you have."

Maurice looked up at Labro, who nodded.

"Very well, sir."

"Jules—"

"What did you say?"

"Jules, I say my name is Jules. Tell them, Oscar, that my name is Jules."

"His name is Jules," repeated the former mayor obediently.

"Are you coming along, Oscar?"

"Yes, here I am."

"You've got bad eyes! Take your glasses off and let me see."

LABRO hesitated, and then complied, exposing his blind eye. The stranger whistled as if in admiration.

"Funny, isn't it? You're minus an eye and I'm minus a leg."

He took his companion's arm as if he were an old friend, and began to hobble along. At every step Labro felt the repercussion of his jerking gait.

"I'd rather stay at the Ark than at your house, you know. I hate to put people out. And your wife's a tough proposition."

His voice rang out in the clear air almost aggressively; there was something malicious and at the same time comical about it.

"I learned the lay of the land when I was coming over on the boat. That old monkey tipped me off."

The "old monkey" was Baptiste, the captain of the *Cormorant*, whose brick-red face was covered with a grizzled stubble. Baptiste grumbled to himself, and Labro did not dare look him in the eye.

"By the way, can you tell them to go after your boat? We're going to use it, both of us. I like to fish, myself. Go ahead and tell them! What are you waiting for?"

"Vial! Will you go after my boat?"

Perspiration ran down over Labro's cheeks and between his shoulder-blades; his glasses slipped down over the bridge of his nose.

"Let's go have a bite to eat, what do you say? Pretty place, this."

They walked up the short slope slowly and painfully, as if to prolong

the passing moment. Then they stood in the square, with the eucalyptus trees planted around it in front of the pastel-colored houses.

"Show me your house. . . . That's it? You like geraniums, I see. Hold on, your wife is looking at us."

Madame Labro stood at a window on the second floor, where she had just hung out the bedclothes to air.

"Is it true that she's hard to get along with? Will she be furious if we go celebrate our meeting over a bottle of wine?"

It was exactly half-past eight by the clock of the little yellow church that seemed to be built of toy blocks. There in the public square, under the gaze of his fellow-citizens, who respected both his wealth and his position, the fifty-year-old and physically strong and alert Monsieur Labro was tempted to fall on his knees and stammer:

"Mercy!"

In fact, he was tempted to debase himself even further. For a moment he was on the point of saying to the stranger:

"Kill me now and get it over with."

It was not a respect for human life that held him back. It was only because he was completely confused and had lost control of body and mind alike. The stranger still gripped his arm tightly, leaning on him at every step, and drew him slowly and relentlessly toward the red and green terrace of the Noah's Ark.

"You come here quite often, I suppose, don't you?"

Labro answered like a pupil questioned by his schoolmaster:

"Yes, several times a day."

"Do you drink?"

"No—not very much."

"Do you ever get drunk?"

"Never."

"I do, sometimes. . . . You'll see—never fear. . . . Hello, is anyone there?"

He pushed his companion ahead of him into the café, in the direction of the bar, whose nickel fittings shone in the dim light. A young waitress, who had no idea what was going on, came out of the kitchen.

"Good morning, Monsieur Labro."

"My name is Jules. . . . Give us a bottle of white wine, my girl, and something to eat."

She looked at Labro.

"Some anchovies?" she asked.

"Good. So Oscar likes anchovies, does he? Let's have them, then. Bring it all out to us on the terrace."

In order to sit down, or rather, to fall into a wicker armchair, he had to stretch out his wooden leg, which remained a dead weight across the passageway between the tables. He wiped his face with a big red handkerchief, for he too felt the heat. Then he spat on the ground and cleared his throat with the raucous and unpleasant noise of a man gargling or brushing his teeth. When their order was brought out, he looked pleased. He held up



"This fellow's impossible," said the proprietor of the Ark. "Jojo won't go in his room any more."

his glass, looked at the clear white wine and sighed:

"This is something like! Here's to you, Oscar! I always said to myself I'd find you some day. . . . Under penalty of death, do you remember? Funny, isn't it? I didn't have the slightest idea of what you were like."

He scrutinized Labro again, with an air of satisfaction and something like glee.

"You've got more fat on you than I have. . . . I'm all muscle." He crooked his elbow and enlarged his biceps. "Feel that? Go ahead, don't be afraid. . . . I knew nothing but your first and last names, as they were printed on the sign. And you're not exactly a famous man with your name in the papers. There are forty million Frenchmen, after all. . . . Guess how I managed to find you. Go on, guess!"

"I can't imagine."

Labro gave a forced smile as if he were trying to appease a dragon.

"Through your daughter, Yvonne."

Labro was even more worried than before, wondering how in the world his daughter could be involved.

"When she was married, about nine months ago. . . . By the way, isn't she expecting yet? . . . Well, when she was married, you gave her a big wedding, and it was reported on the front page of a newspaper called the *Petit Var*. . . . It's published in Toulon, isn't it? Well, what do you think! Down in Addis Ababa there's a fellow from these parts who still subscribes to that paper, although he's lived twenty years in Africa. I read an issue of it in his house, and there I saw your name. . . . Then I remembered the sign."

He frowned, and a hard look came over his face. He glared fiercely at Labro with a trace of sarcasm in his expression.

"What about you? Do you remember?"

Then he added with gruff friendliness:

"Drink up your wine. . . . Under penalty of death, eh? I'm not taking that back. . . . Drink, I tell you. This isn't rum. . . . What's the name of the girl who waited on us?"

"Jojo."

"Jojo! Come here, beautiful. . . . And bring us another bottle. Oscar's thirsty."

Chapter Two

THE SIGN IN THE JUNGLE

EVERY five minutes the man with the wooden leg seized his glass, emptied it with a single swallow and ordered peremptorily:

"Drink up your wine, Oscar!"

Monsieur Labro drank away, and by the end of the third bottle, he could hardly make out the position of the

hands of the clock on the church tower. Was it ten o'clock? Eleven? Jules lay back in his chair, rolling his own cigarettes and smoking them down to the very end, while he fired a volley of questions:

"Where do you come from?"

"Pont-du-Las, on the outskirts of Toulon."

"I've been there. I'm from the Saint Charles section of Marseilles."

This fact seemed to amuse him. But there was something terrifying about his good humor, as about every other manifestation of his overflowing vitality. Even when he looked indulgently at his companion, the pity in his eye was akin to that of a man who is about to crush an insect under his thumb.

"Were your parents well off?"

"No, poor. . . . Well, about average—rather poor, on the whole."

"Just like mine."

"And you just got through school by the skin of your teeth, I'll wager."

"I was never any good at mathematics."

"Just like me again. Drink up your wine! Drink up your wine, I tell you! How did you happen to go to Africa?"

"I went for the S.A.C.O., a Marseilles business firm, right after I finished my military service."

Jules was anxious to find out which of them was the older, and when he learned that Labro was one year his senior, he seemed very pleased.

"We might very well have sailed on the same boat, just as we might have been in the same regiment. Funny, isn't it? Bring us another bottle, Jojo dear."

And when he saw Labro shudder, he added:

"Don't worry! I'm used to it. Besides, you'll be lucky if I get drunk. It makes me sentimental about old times."

People came and went around them. Fishermen went into the café for a drink; others stood around the outdoor bowling alley. They all knew Labro and were used to seeing him at Maurice's place, but no one could help him. They waved hello at him, and all he could do was to part his lips in a forced smile.

"When you did that dirty trick, then, you were only twenty-two. What the devil were you doing in the Umbolé jungle, anyhow?"

"Because I was young and strong, the firm sent me to the remotest villages to organize the gathering of palm oil. I went into the hottest and unhealthiest and wildest part of the equatorial forest, in the Gabon region."

"You weren't alone, were you?"

"No, I had a cook and two paddlers with me."

"And you lost your canoe, did you? Answer me! No, wait! Drink up

your wine first! Drink it up, or I'll strangle you!"

Labro almost choked over his drink. By now his whole body was drenched with perspiration, just as it had been thirty years before down in Gabon. Only, now the perspiration was clammy and cold. He was afraid to tell a lie. He had thought about the whole affair entirely too often in the intervening years, during many a sleepless night. If it weren't for that one thing, he would be an honest man, and a happy one to boot. Every two or three months the whole thing came back to him quite unexpectedly, and the picture he saw of it was always so exactly the same that he called it his "nightmare."

"I didn't lose my canoe," he admitted.

Jules looked at him with knitted brow, as if he could not or would not understand.

"Well then?"

"Well then, nothing at all. It was very hot. . . . As I remember, I was feverish. . . . We had been fighting off the bugs for three days."

"So had I."

"I was only twenty-two."

"So was I—twenty-one, in fact."

"I had very little knowledge of Africa."

"And what about me? . . . Drink! Hurry up and drink, for heaven's sake. . . . You had a canoe, and yet you—"

HOW could Monsieur Labro, the former mayor of Porquerolles, explain, in the quiet atmosphere of his island, the incredible thing that had happened so long ago?

"There was a black man, the paddler who sat next to me. He was of the Pahouin tribe. . . . He had a very bad smell about him."

Here, indeed, lay the real cause of his crime. He was fully aware that he had committed a crime, and he had no intention of trying to excuse himself. If he had done no more than kill a man, thirty years ago, the fact might not have bothered him. But he had done something worse; that he knew very well.

"Go on. . . . So you couldn't stand the smell of the Pahouins, you fussy old boy!"

The jungle swamps of Umbolé—the rivers and canals of muddy water, with big bubbles constantly bursting on the surface, alive with animals of every kind. . . . Not a single yard of solid ground, only low banks covered with vegetation so dense that you could hardly beat your way through it. Bugs swarming about night and day, so thick that he spent most of the time with his head wrapped in a stifling mosquito net. . . . You could paddle for days on end without seeing any human habitation, and then all of a sudden between the roots of a man-



With one stroke, Jules cut the hawsers. The suddenness of the gesture left everyone dumfounded.

grove-tree he had seen a canoe with this sign nailed up on it:

*Don't run off with this boat, UNDER
PENALTY OF DEATH.*

Signed: Jules.

"Another reason. I'm afraid," he said, "was because the words 'under penalty of death' were underlined."

These ridiculous words, in clumsily printed letters, there in the middle of

the tropical jungle, hundreds of miles away from civilization of any kind, not to mention the police! A ridiculous idea had floated into his head, too, the kind of idea that a man gets when the temperature is way over a hundred in the shade. The native smelled to high heaven. . . . His legs were stiff and cramped from their folded position. If he were to take this canoe and tow it behind his own, he would have a

royal amount of space all to himself, and the black's smell wouldn't disturb him any more.

Under penalty of death? What of it? He'd run off with it out of spite! "And so you took it!"

"I beg your forgiveness."

Not only had he taken the canoe, but the devil that was in him had driven him to answer the unknown owner's warning with a stupid joke. Right

on the sign, which he left in plain sight exactly where he had found the canoe, he had scribbled:

"To hell with you!"

And just below he had scrawled contemptuously: *"Oscar Labro."*

"I beg your forgiveness," repeated the now fifty-year-old Labro.

"I told you not to be so stiff with me. It doesn't seem natural. . . . Well, that day, when I came back from hunting something to eat—because I'd been half starved for days—I found myself a prisoner on a sort of island."

"I couldn't know."

"With crocodiles in the water all around me."

"Yes—"

"With snakes and spiders on the ground. . . . And my natives had left me several days before. I was all alone, old man, do you understand?"

"I can only ask you to forgive me!"

"You're a swine, Oscar!"

"Yes, I am."

"A great big, filthy swine! And yet here you are, happy!"

As he spoke, he looked at the pretty pink house, surrounded by geraniums, and at Madame Labro, who every now and then peered out of the window. How could Labro deny it? Could he reply that he wasn't so happy, after all? He didn't quite dare; it seemed to him too cowardly.

JULES tapped his wooden leg on the ground and grumbled:

"That's where I left my leg."

And Labro didn't dare ask him how it had happened, whether a crocodile had bitten it off, or whether it had become in some way infected.

"I've been no good ever since. . . . Didn't you ever wonder after you got my first card, the one from Addis Ababa, why I didn't show up almost immediately? You began to hope I wasn't coming, eh? Well, the fact is that I didn't have a penny to my name. I had to think up a way of paying my way as I came along. And with this stump of mine, do you understand?"

Strange to say, he was much less threatening than he had seemed an hour earlier. At certain moments a bystander might have taken the two for a pair of old friends. He leaned over Labro, took hold of the lapel of his dressing-gown and breathed into his face.

"One more bottle! Oh, yes, I drink, all right. . . . And you're going to drink with me whenever I choose. . . . That's the least you can do, isn't it? How did you lose that eye of yours?"

"Just an accident," answered Labro, ashamed not to have suffered it in the jungle where Jules had left his leg.

"What kind of an accident?"

"It was opening a bottle of vinegar for my wife. The neck of the bottle snapped, and a piece of glass flew into my eye."

"Good for you! How long did you stay in Africa?"

"Ten years. Three periods of three years each, with vacations in between. Then I was transferred to Marseilles."

"And you became something like the manager of the firm."

"Assistant manager. . . . I retired five years ago on account of my eye."

"Are you rich? Well fixed?"

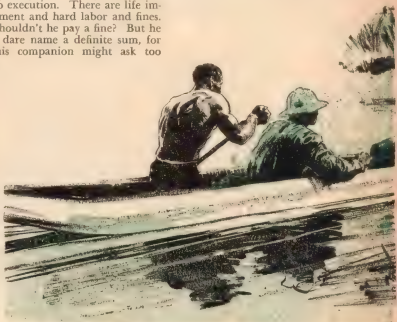
Monsieur Labro had a ray of hope—hope and concern together. He hoped he might get out of this thing with money. Why not, after all? Even in court, when they speak of the death penalty, they don't always sentence a man to execution. There are life imprisonment and hard labor and fines. Why shouldn't he pay a fine? But he didn't dare name a definite sum, for fear his companion might ask too much.

And Labro answered mechanically: "Thanks, Vial."

Not a single soul knew that he was condemned to death. When a man is up before a judge, he has legal means of defending himself, and a lawyer to plead for him. There are newspaper reporters who keep the public informed of what's going on. Even the worst criminals manage to inspire sympathy or pity.

"In short, a lot depends on this island of yours—do you follow me?"

No, he didn't follow. He saw the bottle hanging over his glass, and the



"I live comfortably."

"You have an income of your own, haven't you? How much of a dowry did you give your daughter, Yvonne?"

"I gave her a little house at Hyeres."

"Do you own other houses besides?"

"Two others, small ones."

"Are you close with your money?"

"I can't say—"

"Well, that doesn't matter; it makes no difference."

What did he mean? That he wasn't interested in money? Or that he insisted on exacting the weird penalty of death?

"You know, I never go back on a decision, once I've made it. My word is my bond! But I'm in no hurry."

Labro was not dreaming. The village square still lay before him, although he saw it through a haze. The voices he could hear around him on the terrace and in the café were those of his friends. Vial, with bare feet and a fishing net over his shoulder, called out to him as he went by:

"Your boat's tied up, Monsieur Labro."

glass filling up with wine. A domineering look bade him pick up his glass and drink.

"More of the same, Jojo!"

Labro struggled within himself. Could it be they had drunk five bottles? More than he usually drank in a week. And his digestion had never been very strong, especially after his stay in Africa.

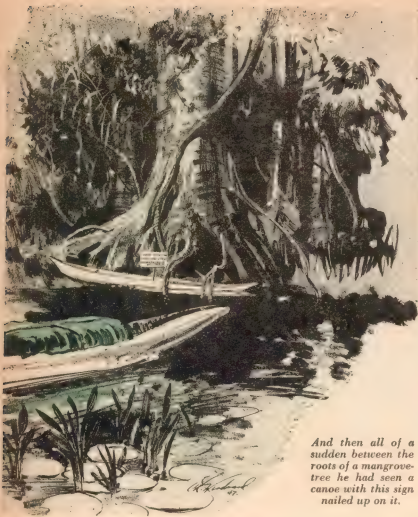
"Is my room a good one? I hope it has a view over the square."

"Of course. I'll speak to Maurice about it."

Here was a chance to get away for a moment, to go alone into the cool shade of the café, to catch his breath away from Jules' fierce and sarcastic gaze. But Jules made him sit down again, laying a hand as heavy as lead on his shoulder.

"We'll see to that in a few minutes. . . . I may come to like it here, and in that case we have plenty of time before us."

Was Labro justified in perceiving a dim ray of hope in these words? The more he thought about it, the less advantage he could see to Jules in his



And then all of a sudden between the roots of a mangrove-tree he had seen a canoe with this sign nailed up on it.

death. Jules' aim was to live at his expense, to sponge off him.

Jules' voice broke in:

"Don't go off on that tangent, Oscar. Little do you know me!"

Labro hadn't so much as opened his mouth. The muscles of his face had not moved, and his eyes, or rather his one good eye, could only be dimly seen through his dark glasses. How had his companion guessed his thoughts?

"I said *under penalty of death*, didn't I? But meanwhile, there's no reason why we shouldn't become better acquainted. When you come down to it, we didn't know a thing about each other. You might have turned out to be short and thin, bald or red-haired. . . . Or to be even more of a swine than you were before. . . . To be a fellow from the North, or a Breton. . . . And now it seems that we almost went to school together! Is it true that your wife's a hard nut to crack? . . . I'll wager she's going to call you down because you're reeking of wine and you've spent half the day on this terrace in your pajamas. . . . It's

comical, you know, to see you in such a costume at this hour. . . . Jojo!"

"Please!"

"This is the last. . . . Another bottle, Jojo! . . . What was I saying? Oh yes, that we have time to become better acquainted. There's fishing, for instance. I've never had time for fishing, or a chance of doing any. . . . You can teach me how to go about it tomorrow. . . . Does one really catch fish?"

"Yes, really."

"Do you yourself catch them?"

"Yes, I do. The same way as the others."

"We'll go fishing, then. . . . And we'll take a few bottles of wine with us. . . . Do you bowl? . . . Good. I was sure you did. You must teach me that, too. It's all for your own good, isn't it? . . . Here's to you! —*Under penalty of death*, don't forget. . . . And now I'm going up to take a nap."

"Aren't you going to have some lunch?" Monsieur Labro couldn't help exclaiming.

"Little Jojo will bring something up to my room."

He rose, sighed, hiked up his shoulder and started to jog in the direction of the café door, which he almost missed entirely. Someone laughed, and Jules turned around with a baleful look in his eye.

"See to it that doesn't happen again," he said to Labro.

He walked through the café and into the kitchen without paying attention to the glances that followed him, tilted the tops off the pots on the stove and then said:

"Show me to my room."

"Very well, Monsieur Jules."

His wooden leg tapped up the stairs and across the floor of his new quarters. Everyone below was listening. Apparently he threw himself across the bed without bothering to undress.

"WHERE does that fellow come from?" asked Maurice, when he came back downstairs. "If he thinks he's going to stay here—"

Monsieur Labro suddenly seemed to take on the manner of his new acquaintance, as he spoke up in a tone of voice that brooked no contradiction:

"You'll have to get used to him."

Then he turned on his heel, and still in his dressing-gown and slippers, crossed the square under the hot noon sun. He saw a bright spot in the doorway of his own house, beyond the geraniums, which was the figure of his wife waiting for him. Although he did not take his eyes off her, aiming at her as directly as he could and making a supreme effort to walk straight, he described several curves on his way to the doorstep.

"What in the world's come over you? What were you doing there on the terrace dressed the way you are? And what's all this about a cut hawser that the vegetable woman tells me? Who is this new arrival?"

Unable to answer all these questions at once, Labro chose the last.

"He's a friend," he said.

And because the wine inclined him to exaggeration, he added, in the thick, slow voice of a man who has had too much to drink:

"My best friend, in fact. He's more than a friend; he's a brother, do you see? I can't let anyone say a word against him."

If he could have had his own way, he would have gone to bed without his lunch too. But this his wife did not allow. . . .

At five o'clock that afternoon there was still no sound except snoring from the room of the new guest at the Noah's Ark. And when a group of bowlers came at about the same time to knock at Monsieur Labro's door, his wife met them and murmured in embarrassment:

"Sh! He's asleep. . . . He's not up to par today."



"Where does that fellow come from? If he thinks he's going to stay here—"

Chapter Three

THE WHIMS OF AN EXECUTIONER

"PUT another hermit-crab on my hook, Oscar."

The two men were in the boat, rocked gently by the slow, regular motion of the waves. At this early hour the sea was almost always as smooth as glass, for the breeze came up a long time after sunrise, toward the middle of the morning. Sea and sky alike had iridescent colors like those of the inside of an oyster shell. Not far from the point of the island, rose the white rock formation known as the Medes.

Just as he had prophesied, Woodenleg had conceived a passion for fishing. His whistle generally aroused Labro around five o'clock in the morning.

"Don't forget the wine," he would shout.

Then the boat's motor began to hum and the *Showcase* left a foaming wake along the indented shore of the island, all the way to the Medes.

But Jules hated to open the hermit-crabs used by the local fishermen as bait. Their shells had to be broken with a hammer or heavy stone, and

they had to be stripped bare and placed intact on the fishing hook. This job fell to Labro, and he spent so much of his time looking after Jules' line that he had little chance to fish for himself. His companion watched him work, while he rolled and lit a cigarette.

"How's this, Oscar? I've just thought of something."

Every day he had some new whim, of which he spoke in a perfectly natural and hearty way, as if he were exchanging confidences with an old friend. Once he said:

"My original plan was to strangle you. Do you know why? Because one day in some bar or other, a woman told me that my hands were those of a strangler. This seemed like a good opportunity for trying them out."

He examined Oscar's neck and his own hands, and shook his head.

"I don't think I'll do it that way, after all," he said.

Then he passed in review, various ways of dying.

"If I were to drown you—I can just see how you'd look when they fished you out of the water. The very thought disgusts me. Have you ever

seen the body of a drowned man, Oscar? You're anything but handsome as you are."

He played out his line to the very end of the reel, and grew impatient when five minutes went by without his getting a bite. Labro, although he had long ago ceased to pray, besought God to send his executioner a fish.

"Lord, let him make a catch, I implore Thee. I don't care about myself."

"I say, Oscar. . . . Hand me a bottle, will you? . . . It's about time."

Every day he began to drink earlier. "This thing is getting more and more complicated. I used to think I'd kill you any old way, without fear of the consequences. . . . Do you see what I mean? I wasn't particularly keen to go on living. In fact, I don't mind telling you that it amused me to think of putting so many people out: the police, the judge, a crowd of pretty women and newspaper men. . . . My trial would make a big splash! I could tell everything I had on my mind, and that's plenty, God knows! I was pretty sure they wouldn't send me to the guillotine. And prison somewhat appealed to me. But now I've taken a new lease on life. That's what's balling things up, because now I've got to kill you and get away with it. Do you see what I'm up against, old man? I've hatched several schemes already. I think about this thing for hours at a time; it's rather fun. I look at it from every possible angle, and try to foresee every detail. Then just when I'm sure the whole thing is sewed up, I remember some little point that explodes it entirely. . . . How would you go about it, if you were in my place?"

He had been on the island for three weeks when he first made this apparently harmless remark:

"How would you go about it, if you were in my place?"

AT exactly this moment, as Labro was to remember later, Jules hauled in a two-pound fish.

"Perhaps it isn't necessary to kill me," he interposed.

His companion looked at him with surprise, almost as if his feelings were hurt.

"Come, come, Oscar! You know I put on the sign: 'Under penalty of death.'"

"But that was a long time ago."

Jules slapped his wooden leg.

This hasn't grown out again in the meantime, has it?"

"We didn't know each other then."

"That's no argument, old man! No, I've got to figure out a way to do it! I've thought from the start that if it happened while we were out at sea, the way we are now. . . . Who can see us, after all? Do you know how to swim?"

"A little."

Almost immediately he was sorry to have put temptation in Jules' way with this encouraging answer, and added: "I swim pretty well, as a matter of fact."

"But you wouldn't swim far if you'd been hit over the head, would you? A heavy blow with the fist doesn't leave a mark. I'd better learn how to run the boat if I'm to get back to port alone. . . . Bait my hook, will you?"

WHEN Jules didn't catch any fish, he was ill-tempered and purposefully cruel.

"You think you can get off by supporting me, don't you? And you count the bottles of wine I drink. You're stingy, Oscar! You're an egotist and a coward! You won't even die with any dignity. Do you want to know something? You turn my stomach. Give me a drink."

And Jules wouldn't drink alone. Labro was living in a perpetual nightmare. By ten o'clock in the morning his head was heavy with wine, and by noon he was drunk. And Jules didn't let him sleep it off in peace. At four or five o'clock in the afternoon he woke him up to go bowling. . . . Jules was no sport, he wanted to win the whole time. He argued over every game, and accused the others of cheating. If anyone smiled or answered him back, he took it out on Labro.

"I wish you wouldn't see so much of that fellow," said Madame Labro. "And I hope you're not paying for the drinking bouts you carry on all day long."

"Of course not. . . . Of course not."

What if she knew that he was paying not only for Jules' drinks, but for his room and board at the Noah's Ark as well?

"Look here, Monsieur Labro," said the proprietor of the Ark. "We've had all sorts of queer guests in our time. But this fellow's quite impossible. Yesterday evening he was chasing my wife down the hall. The day before he was after Jojo, and she won't go in his room any more. . . . He wakes us up in the middle of the night by tapping on the floor with his wooden leg for us to bring him a glass of water and some aspirin. He complains about everything, sends back the food that doesn't suit him, and makes all sorts of offensive remarks in front of our other boarders. I can't stand it any longer."

"I beg of you, Maurice. For the sake of our friendship!"

"I'd do it for you, Monsieur Labro, but not for him."

"Keep him two weeks longer."

Two weeks—one week. . . . Anything to gain time, to stave off the catastrophe. . . . Then he had to go after his bowling companions, because they didn't want to play with this rough friend, who did nothing but grumble and swear at them.

"You've got to play this evening, Vial. . . . And ask Guercy to come too. Tell him I said it was very important, he simply must not fail me."

Tears came to his eyes over the humiliations he had to endure. Sometimes he thought that Jules must be mad. But that didn't help. He couldn't very well have him locked up. And he couldn't call in the police, either, and say to them:

"This man threatens to kill me."

First of all, because he had no proof, except the postcards, and they would laugh at those. And second, because he had a guilty conscience. He, Labro, had contributed to making this man what he was.

Was he, then, to let himself be killed? Or worse yet, must he live on for weeks or months with the fear that at any moment, when he was least expecting it, Jules might say in his gruff but cheery voice:

"The time has come, Oscar."

For Jules was a sadist. He took care to prod his companion's misgivings. As soon as he saw that his victim had somewhat relaxed, he would insinuate gently:

"What if we were to get it over with here and now?"

The "we" was particularly pointed. It was as if it were understood between them that Labro consented to pay the penalty, as if, like Isaac, the son of Abraham, he would go as a willing victim to the sacrifice.

"You know, Oscar, I shall let you suffer as little as possible. I'm not as unkind as I look. It won't take more than three minutes."

Labro had to pinch himself to make sure he wasn't asleep, that the whole thing wasn't a frightful nightmare.

"Meanwhile, pass me the bottle."

Then they turned to other subjects; fish and bowling and Madame Labro, whom Jules detested, although he had only seen her from a distance.

"Haven't you ever thought of getting a divorce? You ought to do it, really. . . . You're unhappy, aren't you? She treats you like a dog, doesn't she? Go on, admit it!"

Labro nodded. What Jules had said was not entirely true; there was only a grain of truth in it. But it was best not to contradict him, for he had a terrible temper.

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward



He started to jog in the direction of the café door, which he almost missed entirely. Some one laughed, and Jules turned with a baleful look in his eye.



He tried out Jules' watchfulness by rising brusquely. Jules' eyes opened. "What are you up to?"

"If you were to get a divorce, I think I'd move into your house. . . . We could have Jojo for a servant."

Labro dug his fingernails into the palms of his hands. At times, wherever he might be, aboard the boat, on Maurice's terrace, or at the bowling alley in the square, he had an overwhelming desire to stand up straight and scream at the top of his lungs, like a dog barking at the moon. Perhaps he himself was going mad.

"I've noticed that you do the cooking."

"All I cook is fish."

"You know how to cook, just the same. I'm told that you even wash the dishes. . . . What do you think of my proposition?"

"My wife wouldn't hear of it."

Jules reopened this discussion three or four days later.

"Think it over. . . . Such an arrangement might persuade me to wait a little longer. . . . In spite of the fact that I've spent most of my life in lodging-houses, I have an idea that I was made for a home of my own."

"What if I were to give you the money to set up housekeeping somewhere else?"

"Oscar!"

Jules called him strictly to order.

"Take care not to talk to me that way any more. If it happens again, I may take action immediately. Immediately, do you hear?"

It was then that the phrase used by Wooden-leg some time before came

back to Labro's mind. What was it he had said just as he was pulling the two-pound fish out of the water?

"How would you go about it, if you were in my place?"

Suddenly these words appeared to him as a sort of revelation. What Jules could do, he could do too. And Jules always said:

"I'm sure there's a method of killing you without getting nabbed."

SURELY this worked both ways. Why shouldn't Labro get rid of his companion? The first time that this thought passed through his mind, he was afraid that it could be read in his face, and he was glad that he wore dark glasses. From this day on, he watched Jules closely. He noticed that every morning, after the third bottle of wine, Jules lost interest in fishing, lolled about in the boat and sank into a sleepy, almost comatose, condition. Did he really fall asleep, or was he still on guard in spite of appearances? He tried out Jules' watchfulness by rising brusquely to his feet. Jules' eyes opened halfway, with a sparkling, malicious expression and he muttered thickly:

"What are you up to?"

Labro had a plausible answer at the tip of his tongue, but he thought it better not to try too soon again, lest he awaken suspicion. And if his companion suspected him, it was plain that he would "take action immediately."

Jules remarked one day:

"The current is almost always from east to west in the morning. That means your body will follow along after the boat, and probably drift up on the beach not far from the harbor."

He looked across the smooth water. Labro looked in the same direction, but each one of them saw a different corpse afloat upon it.

"I'll have to do it when you're standing up, because you're so very heavy. If I had to pick your body up and throw it overboard, I might upset the boat or else fall in after you."

"Quite true," said Labro to himself. "He's heavy too, and his wooden leg makes him even more unwieldy than I am. But I'm lucky to have the hammer I use on the hermit-crabs right beside me."

But the next day he thought better of it. "No, the hammer's out; it would surely leave a mark. With that wooden leg of his, a bit of a push would be enough to make him lose his balance."

The two men observed the water about them. They knew their anchorage well. At a certain hour the fishermen came by in their boats after hauling in their nets on the other side of the island. And there with a tropical helmet on his head, was an old pensioner, who came out to moor half a mile away from the *Showcase* about eight in the morning. At some time between the passage of the fishermen and eight o'clock, then.

There was another danger, of which Jules was not aware. Among the pine trees along the shore was the station of a petty officer of the Navy, who guarded the fortified rocks known as the Medes. Labro alone knew that twice a week, on Tuesday and Friday, he went on Baptiste's boat to Hyères. That meant he must leave home at about seven.

A quarter to eight. That was the propitious time. And he must make sure that the lighthouse keeper was not leaning on the well and looking out over the sea with his field-glasses.

"There are days, Oscar, when I wonder if I hadn't better have done with it. Maurice's cooking isn't bad, but I'm beginning to tire of the same dishes. . . . Not to mention the fact that there aren't any women. Jojo turns a deaf ear."

Labro blushed like a schoolboy. Did the fellow expect him to procure!

"We've had some good times together, true enough. We're almost pals, I'm the first to admit. Yes, I mean it. I always say what I mean. I shan't enjoy attending your funeral. Are you to be buried at Porquerolles?"

"I own a lot in the cemetery."

"Good! That's better than going over to the mainland. . . . Pass me the bottle, Oscar. . . . Take a drink yourself first. . . . Well, then. . . . Never mind your wife, and do what I suggest."

Somewhere not so far away thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of men were living normal lives. Was such a life out of the question?

"What surprises me is that you could have used such bad language there in the jungle. . . . You've become eminently respectable since then. Yes or no? I'm sure you're richer than you say. Don't you ever play the stock market?"

"A little."

"See there! I knew it! And yet we had the same sort of a start in life. . . . Who knows? If there hadn't been that business of the canoe, and I hadn't lost my leg, I might be as well off as you are today. . . . What a swine you were! Just imagine! How could you leave a man, another white man too, in a fix like that, with no way of getting out of the swamp? Don't you ever think about it, Oscar? And such language! Words that I'd never say, even if I'm not a respectable chap like you. You can't imagine how at times you revolt me."

At moments like these Labro did not dare get up, for fear of alarming his companion. He had put the hammer and the big stone that served as ballast out of reach.

"So you're afraid to die, are you? Funny, it doesn't bother me in the least. It's only because you're a man of property and have something to lose."

Well then, if Jules had nothing to lose—

"I wonder whether I have any relatives left. . . . I had a sister who must have married, but I've never heard from her—unless she came to a bad end, like me."

What could the fellow's family name be? Down there in the jungle he had put nothing but "Jules" on his damned sign. Jules who?

Labro asked him. The other looked at him in astonishment.

"Why—Chapus. . . . Didn't you know? Jules Chapus. Just as good as Labro, isn't it? I'll wager there are some Chapus who have made their way in life. . . . Hand me the bottle. . . . No. Here you are. I wonder—"

Why was he raising himself from his seat?

Labro clung desperately to his own. He clung there with all his strength, but the perspiration burst out on his forehead only after he realized that Jules had got up merely in order to attend to a call of nature.

After his fear there came a reaction. He began to shake all over. He shook with the accumulated fears of several months, and then, suddenly, he rose in his turn and took two steps forward. . . .

Chapter Four

THE WRECK OF THE SHOWCASE

LABRO threw caution to the winds and forgot all his carefully laid plans, which had fitted in with the schedule of the Navy watchman, the return of the fishing fleet and the arrival of the old pensioner in the tropical helmet. Nevertheless, luck was with him. The lighthouse keeper happened at that very moment to be scanning the sea with his glasses, and he gave the following testimony:

"At a given moment, about ten minutes to eight, I looked toward the Medes and I saw two men locked together aboard the *Showcase*. First I thought one of them must be ill and the other was keeping him from falling into the water. Then I realized that they were fighting. Because I was several hundred yards away, there was nothing I could do. A few moments later they both fell down on the gunwale and the boat capsized."

At this very instant Vial, the fisherman, and his two sons came around the Medes.

"I saw a boat upside down in the water, and I recognized it as the *Showcase*. I always said it would turn over some day, because it was topheavy on account of the built-on cabin. . . . When we first saw the two men in the water, they were just an indistinct mass. . . . I believe that Monsieur Labro, who's a good swimmer, was trying to keep his friend's head up.

Or else, as often happens, the other was hanging on to him for dear life."

The pensioner saw nothing at all. "I was just pulling a fish out of the water. . . . I heard a noise, but I didn't pay attention. . . . Besides, Monsieur Labro's boat was between me and the sun, and I couldn't make much out because the light dazzled my eyes."

No one, then saw exactly what took place. No one but Labro. When he had come close enough to Jules to touch him, Jules had turned toward him, and his face was no longer angry or threatening, but stricken with utter terror. Labro could hardly believe his eyes. He saw before him quite another man, a man who was afraid, whose eyes implored him, whose lips trembled and who said:

"Don't, don't, Monsieur Labro!"
Yes, he had said:
"Don't, don't, Monsieur Labro!"
And not:
"Don't, don't, Oscar!"

The voice, too, was entirely different, and deeply disturbed him. But it was too late. He could not turn back. First, because he had set himself in motion. And then, what would have happened if he had withdrawn? How could he face a man whom he had just tried to kill? There could be no further relationship between them.

The whole thing lasted only a few seconds. Labro shoved Jules with his shoulder strongly enough to topple him over, but somehow or other Jules caught hold of him. God only knows how they stood up on the gunwale, in precarious balance, while the boat rocked beneath them.

Both of them breathed hard. They had never been so close to each other, and they were both afraid. They were equally tall and big and strong, and they were locked together, just as the lighthouse-keeper said. Jules gasped:

"Listen, I—"

Too late! It was too late to listen to what he had to say! One of them had to break away; one of them had to fall over. And they fell together, just as the *Showcase* overturned.

In the water they clung to each other again, or rather, Wooden-leg hung on, with mute terror in his eyes. Was he trying to speak? He opened his mouth in vain, only to have it filled with salt water.

There was the sound of a motor. A boat was approaching. How, in spite of everything, did Labro know it was Vial? Subconsciously, no doubt. He struck out in order to free himself. He hit his companion square on the face, and the bone of the nose hurt his fist. And that was all. Vial called out:

"Keep your head up, Monsieur Labro!"

Was he swimming? Did some part of him bleed? He had lost his glasses,

and a fishing line was tangled around his legs.

"Catch hold of him, Ferdinand."

Vial was speaking to one of his sons. They grabbed him as if he were a big package that was too heavy for them. They let him go and caught him again with a boathook that made a gash at his waistline.

"Hold on, Father. . . . Wait till I get his leg."

Labro lay flat at the bottom of Vial's boat, dripping water, and with tears in his eyes. The others thought it was sea water, but he knew that it was tears.

HE hardly had to lie at all. Everyone else lied for him, quite unconsciously. The entire village, in fact, the entire island, had made its own reconstruction of the episode before he was even questioned.

"Did you know the fellow well?" asked an inspector with a knowing air.

"I knew him once upon a time in Africa."

"And you were much too kind to take him in. He abused your hospitality in every possible way. On this point there's no lack of witnesses. He made life impossible for everybody."

"But—"

"Not only was he drunk every day from early morning on, but he took a malicious pleasure in being disagreeable and even threatening. . . . The morning of the accident he had already drunk two bottles of wine, hadn't he?"

"I don't remember."

"It's more than likely, according to his usual program. . . . He insulted you. Perhaps he went so far as to attack you. Anyhow, you had a fight."

"Yes, we had a fight."

"You weren't armed, were you?"

"No, I didn't even have the hammer with me."

No one paid attention to this answer, which he wished that he could take back, since it might have been incriminating.

"He fell overboard, and the boat capsized. . . . He hung on to you."

And the investigator concluded:

"Too bad, of course, but it was a good riddance."

Was Monsieur Labro dreaming again? Was the nightmare of recent weeks and months to turn into an idyl of sweetness and light? It was too good to be true.

"I'm very sorry for what I did."

"Come, come! You were quite within your rights to defend yourself. With a fellow like that!"

Labro frowned. Why did it seem to him that there must be something wrong? He was getting off entirely too easily, and this very fact worried him. Because he was somewhat feverish, he confused the present with the past, and referred vaguely to events with which his interrogator had no

acquaintance. In his delirium the *Showcase* was mixed up with the stolen canoe in the Umbolé jungle.

"I know perfectly well that I shouldn't have—"

"Your wife, Maurice, Vial and the others have told us everything."

How could these people who knew nothing have given the police any information?

"You were too generous and hospitable. Just because you've met a fellow in a bar out in the colonies, is no reason for taking him in when he's down and out. You see, Monsieur Labro, your only mistake was that you didn't make inquiries about him. If you had come to us—"

What? What were they saying? Inquiries?

"The police of five countries were after him for various frauds. He was at the end of his rope; wherever he went, there was a risk of being apprehended. That's why, I repeat, it was a good riddance. That's the end of Marelier, thank God!"

Labro lay motionless for a minute, unable to take in what the other had said. From his bed he could see the shadowy design on the wall by the sun streaming through the curtains.

"What did you say, please?" he asked politely, in a far-away voice.

"Marelier—Jules Marelier. . . . He's been floating around North Africa and the Near East for the last twenty years, swindling right and left. And before that, he spent ten years in the Fresnes Penitentiary for burglary."

"Just a minute. . . . Are you sure his name was Jules Marelier?"

"Yes indeed. First we found papers in his trunk, and then we got hold of his fingerprints and his description."

"And he was at Fresnes. . . . Careful, there. . . . Excuse me. . . . My poor head. How long ago, exactly?"

"Thirty years."

"And his leg—"

"What about his leg?"

"How did he lose his leg?"

"In a jail break. . . . He fell thirty feet onto some cement he didn't know was there. . . . You're looking tired. The doctor is in the next room with your file. I'll call him."

"No. Wait. . . . When did he go down to the Gabon region?"

"Gabon? He was never there. We have his whole story. He never went beyond Dakar. . . . Don't you feel well?"

"Never mind. . . . He never went into the Umbolé jungle?"

"What's that?"

"It's a part of Gabon."

"I just told you."

Labro groaned in despair:

"Then he's not the man! He's not the same Jules."

The door opened, and the inspector called out anxiously:

"Doctor! I think he needs you."

"No! Leave me alone!" cried Labro, struggling with the bedclothes. "You can't possibly understand. It was another Jules. . . . I killed another Jules—another Jules, who—"

"STAY quiet. Don't be nervous. You've been quite delicious, Oscar, my dear," said Madame Labro.

"What did I say?"

"Just silly things. But we were worried. The doctor wondered if you weren't going to have a stroke."

"But what did I say?"

"You were always raving about Jules, the two Jules. . . . There seemed to be two of them in your dreams."

Labro smiled faintly and bitterly.

"Go on."

"You kept on saying you'd killed a man all for nothing. . . . No, stay quiet. . . . Take your medicine. . . . It doesn't taste bad, and you'll sleep better for it."

He was glad enough to take the medicine and sleep. The whole thing was too dreadful. Yes, he had killed a man for nothing. He had killed a Jules who wasn't Jules, a poor fellow who really didn't have it in for him, a common thief who was only trying to sponge on him for the rest of his life on the basis of blackmail.

He could still hear Wooden-leg's voice when he had cried out in terror: "Don't, don't, Monsieur Labro!"

Without being familiar or vulgar—almost with respect! And the rest had been only a hoax. He, Labro, had been scared out of his wits and killed a man all for nothing.

"WELL, Monsieur Labro, a good riddance, eh? We can bowl in peace and quiet."

Peace reigned, too, at the Noah's Ark, where the wooden leg no longer thumped on the floor.

"And you used to tell us to put up with him because he had been through so much down in Gabon, where he'd never set foot in his life! Have a glass of wine, Monsieur Labro?"

"No, thanks."

"Aren't you well?"

"Oh, I'm getting better."

He'd have to get used to the idea of being a murderer. And there was no use proclaiming it from the houseposts.

All because a swindler, wanted by the police and tired of dragging himself around, had heard a group of colonials, in some bar, God knows where, telling the story of Jules Chapus' canoe. Meanwhile Jules Chapus had died, quite normally, fifteen years after the jungle episode, in Indo-China, where he was a business representative.

And then one day this swindler had seen the name of Oscar Labro in a newspaper he picked up at Addis Ababa. And he had had the brilliant idea of taking it easy for the rest of his life on the island of Porquerolles.

Who's Who in this Issue



John Randolph Phillips

BORN in Lynchburg, Virginia, several years ago, but was early transplanted to a farm in Albemarle County in the same State. There I did all the things country boys do the world over, and a few the others never thought of, such as smuggling a bullfrog into a one-room schoolhouse, releasing it, and watching it go hippity-hoppy down an aisle, to the delight of fellow-students and the horror of the teacher. Said teacher made me tell the world five hundred times on the blackboard that I must not bring frogs to school.

Attended the University of Virginia five years. Did not distinguish myself. Later worked two years on a magazine in New York. About this time the dream-girl cut short her graduate career at the University of California and stopped by New York on her way home. I got her name more or less on the dotted line then, and we came home to Virginia in 1930 to live in a big old house atop a hill overlooking the town of Scottsville and the James River. Have been free-lancing ever since.

I consider myself a very lucky guy. I work hard but not too hard. I have time to hunt and fish and raise birds. I have a daughter who always gets on the honor roll at school and who has never, so far as I know, tormented her teacher with a bullfrog.

Wayne D. Overholser

I WAS born in Pomeroy, Washington, in 1906. We moved to Oregon in 1912. I attended Albany College in 1924-25, Oregon Normal School in 1925-26, and received a degree from the University of Oregon in 1934. I taught school at Tillamook and Bend, Oregon, for nineteen years, and have been free-lancing for two years. We moved to Montrose, Colorado, last July in search of new settings and material.

I have sold over two hundred stories varying in length from short shorts to

novels. My first book-length story, "Buckaroo's Code," was brought out by MacMillan last January.

Stamp-collecting and chess are my principal hobbies, although collecting pioneer lore has both professional and hobby interest for me. One field that particularly intrigues me is the Civil War period in the Far West, a very important chapter in American history that has almost entirely escaped the attention of our historians.

I am married and have two sons.

Collin Ostrander

WHENEVER the story is told about a man with buckshot in his back, some joker usually suggests that he probably got it swiping watermelons.

It's true in at least one case we know about. The blast knocked high-school sophomore Ostrander flat in the watermelon patch, and temporarily out. But he got up to run again shortly, hurdled a barbed-wire fence and escaped, with successive wild shots flying over his head.

By the time the war came along, he had another nick—in his hand, from a .22-caliber bullet. He enrolled in the Navy with tongue in cheek and fingers crossed, not particularly wanting to test the adage of three times and out.

On amphibious duty in charge of varying numbers of landing craft loaded with Army and Marine troops, he came through the landings at Kwajalein, Guam, Peleliu, Leyte, Luzon and Iwo Jima without a scratch.

After serving on board the U.S.S. *Leedstown* and the U.S.S. *Arcturus*, Lieutenant Ostrander was assigned to the press section of the Navy's public information office in Washington, D.C., for a year after the war ended.



Collin Ostrander



Walter de Steiguer

He is now editor of *The Naval Reservist*, and has contributed Navy articles to other magazines.

Born in Albert Lea, Minnesota, he was graduated from Macalester College in 1942 and now lives in Arlington, Virginia. And for all he cares, the watermelons may ripen on the vines like sour grapes.

Walter de Steiguer

PRIOR to the late war, I had succeeded in breaking and entering some of the better-known weekly and monthly magazines, including *BLUE BOOK*. My effort to expand these activities into a real crime-wave halted when the Pearl Harbor news broke. During the war years I served as an Intelligence officer (Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps), mainly at Headquarters Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C.; though brief temporary duty with the Twelfth and Fifteenth Air Forces enabled me to fly the Atlantic and see something of North Africa, Italy, Sardinia and Corsica. The principal dangers I survived were those of getting suffocated or trampled to death in the war-time Washington busses.

My interest in semi-scientific fiction perhaps derives from education at M.I.T. as a mining engineer—though because of getting involved in other activities, I never followed engineering as a profession. One of my previous stories in this category—"The Black Stone"—met with some favor, and this encouraged me to try again with the present "Journey Beyond Light."

In general, though, I admit to regarding scientific progress—and most other so-called "progress"—with a wary and skeptical eye. Really worthwhile activities, in my catalogue, are headed by desert-rattling in the West, and float-fishing on the Ozark rivers. (Have resided mostly in California, but am now living in Missouri.)

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